

The Deadliest Live Bait Method You Can Use!

**WALLEYES
AND ALL GAME FISH
LOVE
NIGHTCRAWLERS**

NIGHTCRAWLER
SECRETS

**BOOK
2**

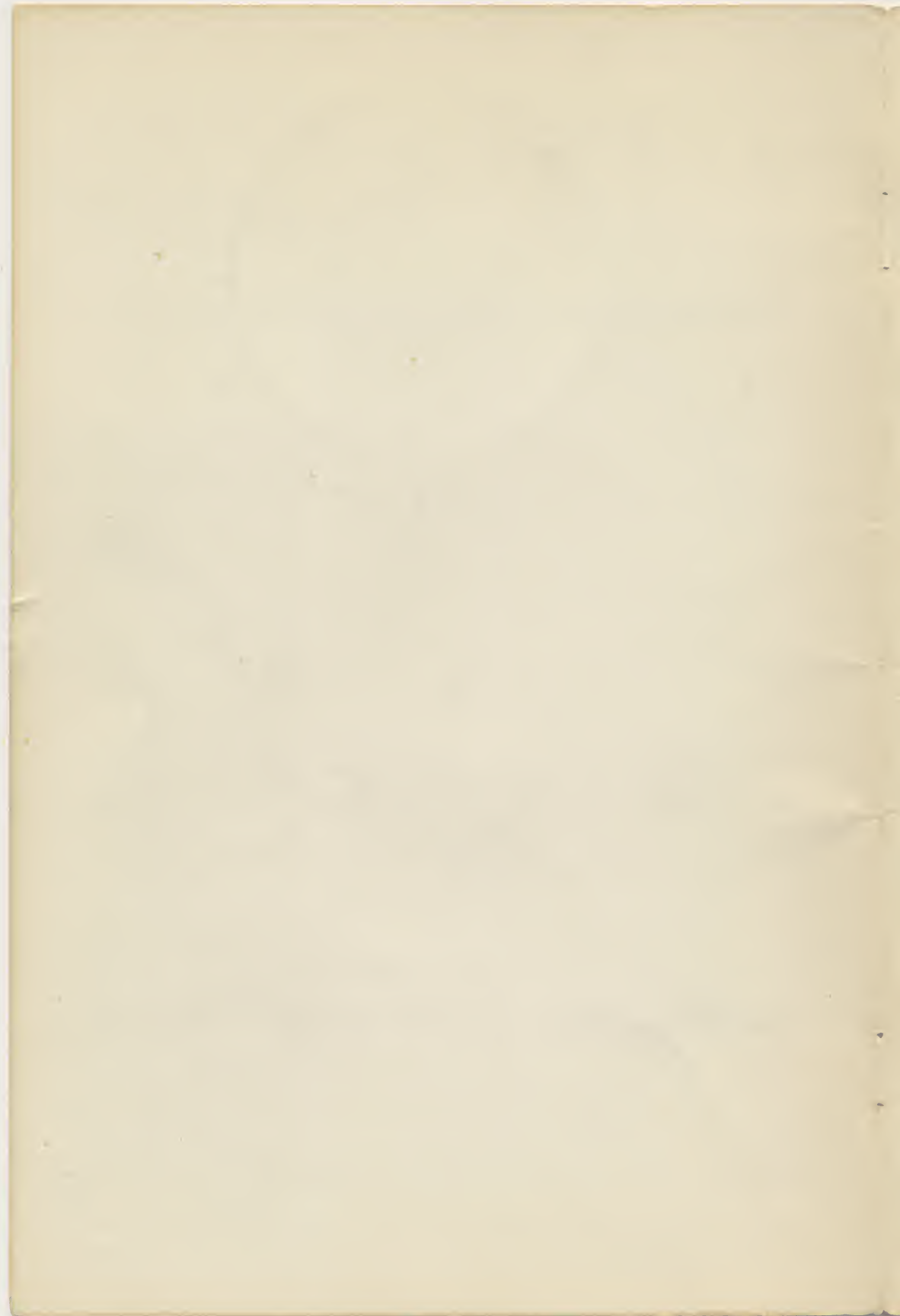


by BILL BINKELMAN, editor of

FISHING
Facts

**A TOTAL METHOD
THAT CONVERTS
ORDINARY
NIGHTCRAWLERS
INTO THE MOST
DEADLY KILLERS
OF BASS,
WALLEYES,
& ALL GAME FISH!**

\$200





Bill Binkelman at Eagle Knob, Lake Owen, near Cable, Wisconsin

WALLEYES
(& ALL GAME FISH)
LOVE
NIGHTCRAWLERS

(NIGHTCRAWLER SECRETS BOOK 2)

by BILL BINKELMAN

Editor of FISHING FACTS MAGAZINE

**With Additional Material Contributed by
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See Page 78



"Walleyes like this—30 minutes from home—you can do it, too. I'm no super fisherman—and my secrets are secret no longer—they're all here, in Nightcrawler Secrets Books 1 & 2."

Table of Contents

I	WALLEYES LOVE NIGHTCRAWLERS!	8
II	NOBODY'S SPONSORING NIGHTCRAWLERS	12
III	LUNKERS OF THE DEEP	16
IV	HOW WALLEYES MOVE	20
V	HOW DO YOU FIND STRUCTURE?	27
VI	TO KNOW A LAKE—CONCENTRATE	36
VII	THE WEATHER & FISHING	40
VIII	TEMPTING THE FISH—BITING vs STRIKING	44
IX	DON'T BE ASHAMED OF USING LIVE BAIT	46
X	CONDITION CRAWLERS TO MAKE THEM IRRESISTIBLE TO BIG WALLEYES	48
XI	NOW TO GET 'EM ON YOUR STRINGER!.....	52
XII	GET RESULTS WITH A FAST RETRIEVE.....	56
XIII	WALLEYES & LOGS	60
XIV	WALLEYES & SLIDING EGG SINKERS.....	64
XV	CRAWLERS & FAST WATER.....	68
XVI	CRAWLERS & SKIRTS	72
XVII	THEY'RE DYING OF OLD AGE!.....	74

CHAPTER I

Walleyes Love Nightcrawlers!

Walleyes Love Nightcrawlers!

I have seen "crawlers" take walleyes ten to one over minnows in Canada, in the northern states, and down south. I have seen this happen in rivers, flowages, lakes, and below dams. Just about anywhere the crawler, if in the right condition and fished right, is THE TOP walleye killer. Not always, just most times, MOST EVERYWHERE.

Repeat: IF in the *right* condition and IF fished *right*. That's what this book is all about! How to fish it right.

What's that? You say that walleyes feed mostly on minnows? I certainly agree. After all, "crawlers" are somewhat scarce on the lake bottom. Maybe that's one big reason why a walleye that is crammed with minnows will almost always find room for a big, fat, lively crawler. He probably regards it as a special, tasty tid-bit.

I once "chummed" a huge school of walleyes by throwing several hand-fuls of crawlers into the water. I boated about 30 and then quit. Every once in a while, fishing can get too good.

Because I'm not sure that this is legal, I'm not telling you where this took place. Probably I wouldn't have used it this morning, but I was desperate. I had had two fishless days and it was noon of the third day. Still no fish.

I was tired, a little disgusted, and just about ready to give up. Then for some reason I decided to try one more place. I wasn't too hopeful.

This spot was an extra deep shore-line drop off, with a deep but narrow rock bar running through it and out into the lake. I had tried it earlier, but then it had been empty.

This spot was peculiar in that it

never had produced more than three fish at any one given time. It always "felt" like the school just drifted slowly past it, headed for who knows where. At times before, I had picked up a few fish in a few, brief moments from this place. Then it would go dead. But it was close to camp, so what could I lose?

I made one cast to 20 foot water and laid this rod down to let the crawler settle and "work" a little. I made another cast with a rod rigged with a jig and crawler intending to use this as my "fast retrieve" rod.

(Using two rods when fishing is slow often pays off. It sure did this time.)

As I began the "jig and crawler" retrieve I noticed the "resting" line twitch. I picked up the rod, slowly tightened the line, and felt a slight resistance. It was a fish for sure, but it felt very small—or not very interested. I pulled a little more to make this disinterested fish think that the bait was trying to get away. This worked. He took solidly, and I set the hook in my first fish in 2 and a half days. His deep strong runs told me that I was onto a nice walleye.

Right then, and I still don't know why I did it, I did my "chumming." Because I hadn't caught fish, I had plenty of crawlers. I decided to try to "hold" the school. So, I let the hooked fish run, grabbed lots of crawlers and scattered them, throwing them out as far as I could. I must have thrown six dozen.

Then I landed the first fish. While netting this fish, I saw my jig and crawler line moving. That was walleye number two and the end of two

rod fishing for that morning. One rod kept me busy. It was one fish after the other.

This went on for about twenty minutes, by then it was lunch time. Other boats began to pass on their way back to the lodge. Each one gave the "palms up" signal for no fish. I returned this signal, but with only one hand. My other hand was holding a rod, with a fighting fish on it, under the water out of sight. Right then I was in no mood to share this spot.

Once the "fleet" had passed, I returned to catching walleyes, one on every cast. It was fantastic — for a while. But finally, as always happens on these very rare times when fishing is too good, I got tired of it. Then I wished that I had shared it.

But it was too late. I went in with my limit. The other men saw it and heard the story, but after they finished lunch and got to the spot the fish were gone.

Incidentally, every one of these wall-

eyes that I caught, had a crawler or two half way down. These fish must have had a merry 'ole' time scurrying around, digging out crawlers from the rocky bottom. Incidentally too, all these fish had their gullets full, crammed with 2 inch shiners.

What this proves, I'm not sure, not positive anyway. I don't think that you can "call" a school, but I am pretty certain that you can hold a school. I'm pretty darn certain too, that walleyes love crawlers.

Someday I'm going to check out the legality of this in Wisconsin. It just might come in handy.

The point of telling this story is to help you convince yourself that crawlers are deadly for walleyes. The careful reader will begin to think about fishing crawlers so that they look and act "natural." Then he will be on his way to making Nightcrawler Secrets his own. He will begin to get the idea. That's what this method really is — an idea.



"Walleyes and Bass from the same structure but different depths. Caught out of Eagle Knob Lodge on Lake Owen, Bayfield County, Wisconsin—with Nightcrawler Secrets, of course!"

CHAPTER II

NOBODY'S SPONSORING NIGHTCRAWLERS

Nobody's Sponsoring Nightcrawlers

Some years ago I read of the world record walleye, a huge, even unbelievable fish of over 20 pounds. I read, too, of other walleyes being caught that came close to this monster. As near as I could determine, these fish came from the big impoundments on the Kentucky-Tennessee border. So early one February, I went there.

I hired a guide. It's kind of stupid to tackle these big waters "cold." Luckily I got a good one. We got along just fine and became friends, which made the trip much more enjoyable.

We were fishing near an impoundment, in the tail races of a big dam, on a river, exactly where one of these near record walleyes had been caught. I mentioned this fish to my guide, and then my guide told me that his cousin had caught it.

He said that this walleye had been caught from the exact spot where we were fishing. Then he told me of how it fought in the current, and how it took three men to land it. He was one of the three.

I said that I had read about this giant and I had read about the bait that it was caught on. I asked why we weren't using that bait.

My guide burst out laughing and replied, "We may be hill-billies but we aren't dumb. Hell's fire, that fish was caught on nightcrawlers, but nobody's sponsoring nightcrawlers. My cousin contacted tackle manufacturers. He got offers and took the best one." So the record reads that such and such a rod and reel and bait took this giant, near record fish. Such is fishing.

The above is all true, word for word. I don't think that I can be sued by any tackle manufacturer because I specifically said that this fish was not THE record fish. Nor did I say which

of the several near record walleyes it was.

Incidentally, my guide was a relative of the famous World War I Sgt. York.

What's the point of this story? Well there are several. What is important for now is that nightcrawlers catch big walleyes. I put that fact in my mental file, and began experiments that finally resulted in more Nightcrawler Secrets, and that strengthened my conclusion that the nightcrawler can be, if properly fished, a walleye bait on most lakes, at most times, second to none. Not always—just most times—at most places.

Okauchee Lake is a clear water lake near Milwaukee—about 20-30 minutes drive. It's a heavily fished body of water that is loaded with speedboats and water skiers. But it has big fish — really big fish.

One of my favorite fishing partners is a man named Bob Reimer. Bob's one of the best fishermen I've ever met. He's fished Okauchee Lake since he was a boy—more than 20 years—but he had never caught a walleye there. Bass by the hundreds, this top-notch fisherman has taken out of Okauchee, but never a walleye—until that day, the 20th of September, 1964.

It was a Sunday afternoon, and conditions were almost perfect . . . six days since the last cold front . . . dark, rainy and warm. The fish just HAD to be on the move, we thought. However, the first two hours went by without a single fish. We checked out a number of our favorite "hot spots" . . . nothing.

Finally, one of us said, "Let's try to find that little sunken island again." We had been trying to find it for years — always without success. We knew that it was somewhere off of

Nichol's Point and that a *few* of the "locals" fished it . . . but they were tighter than wallpaper with the information. So, we took off at top speed to find our little sunken island. While we were still some distance out, I switched on our depth finder and idly watched the dial read steady at 80 feet. Suddenly it flashed 45 feet and just as quickly was back down to 80. We had passed over some kind of an elevation . . . but it was mighty small. We circled back and there it was! A tiny peak that rose out of 80 feet of water to about 22 feet and sharply back down. It was so small that when we anchored on top of it, we were able to cast off into deep water on all sides.

We cast and cast to all sides . . . nothing. We were ready to call it quits, when suddenly Bob got the first fish. It came in hard . . . digging down to deep water . . . but when he finally got it near the top we saw it was a big, four pound walleye!

We could hardly believe our eyes. After all these years . . . we had found the Okauchee walleyes! There was no mistake about that white-tipped tail and those big, white eyes. Bob got another before I got my first one, and then he got another and another. The spot was so small that it could only be reached by casting over the bow of the boat, which meant I had to cast over Bob's head. His fourth walleye tangled badly in the net so I sneaked a cast over Bob's head, let it sink and began a slow retrieve. Suddenly it seemed like I had tied into the bottom of the lake. The fish was incredibly strong and almost refused to come up out of the deep water. When I finally got him only a few feet from the surface, the magnifying effect of the water made him look too huge for the net. He nearly was! That huge gray shape and the big white eyes — he went over eight pounds!

Each of us finally got our limit— 5 each, 10 fish in all. We had two eight-pounders, two four-pounders, four that went about two pounds and two that weighed about a pound and a half. What fishing! Walleyes in Okauchee—it seemed too good to be true! When we got back to the dock, the excitement at Ray Schroeder's boat livery was something to see. Bob Reimer kept telling everyone, "I've fished this lake since I was a kid — but this is the first time I ever caught walleyes!" The lessons of that day are important:

- * The fish had been there for years. Those lakes close to home have schools of big fish that die of old age. People haven't been catching them because they didn't *know how* to catch them.
- * After a cold front has passed (24 or 48 hours), the fish will migrate to the breaks and drop-offs where they can be caught.
- * A hot muggy day improves fishing.
- * Even under perfect conditions, you have to wait for the fish to move. You can have several blank hours and then, suddenly, just like turning on a light, the fish are there!
- * A good spot, particularly in deep water, can be so very, very small. Miss that tiny spot and you miss the fish. You will swear they are "not biting."

What was the bait that did the trick? Bob was using the Nightcrawler Secrets method and I was using a Crawford jig tipped with a nightcrawler. Not just *any* nightcrawler, but the biggest, fattest, most tasty-looking nightcrawler that we could find and **CONDITION** to the point of being an irresistible temptation to a big, lunker walleye.

Walleyes *love* nightcrawlers like *that*—you'd better believe it!



"These fish are too heavy for a man my age to hold up in the air. Heavy as they are, they were caught on 4 lb. line, No. 8 hooks, and irresistable nightcrawlers from Lake Okauchee, 30 miles from Milwaukee.

Chapter III

Lunkers of the Deep

Lunkers of the Deep

Down in the shadowy depths of our deep-water lakes . . . where the light of day never penetrates, and man seldom ventures . . . lives the mystery fish. Ten, twelve pounds and more, these lunkers live out their lives unseen by human eyes. They grow older and bigger, year after year, and then finally, in nature's process of aging, they become unable to feed and slowly starve to death. Thus, when they die, there is no food left in their bellies to form gas and float their bodies to the surface . . . so they remain in the depths to disintegrate and be consumed by bottom dwelling creatures. These are the mystery fish, dwellers of the deep, incredibly shy, identified by their big white eyes and white-tipped tails as the fish men call **WALLEYES**. Their huge gray shapes swim silently through the deep in schools of 50 or even hundreds. These are walleyes that men rarely catch. These are not the one and two pounders that fishermen usually bring to shore . . . these are the fish that less than 1% of all fishermen know how to catch. Few walleyes beyond 4 pounds are ever caught — yet our Fyke nets readily bring them in at 10 pounds and over. Where ARE the big walleyes? In the lake — in the lake!

This book will reveal a method that will put YOU into that 1% class — a method of catching that shy lunker of the deep, the **BIG walleye**—a method that will also catch walleyes of all sizes!

Have you ever even *seen* a 12 pound walleye? When you lift him his belly sags between your hands. Your hands actually seem to sink into his enormous body. He looks gigantic; you feel ten feet tall. No matter who you are or where you are, you will experience

hours and days of exhilaration such as you have never known — after you boat one of these.

A pipe dream you say? Oh no! There are plenty of fish like this within an hour's drive of cities like Milwaukee and Chicago — and hundreds of other cities across these United States. Even the fact that so few are caught is more positive proof that they are there. They are there to be caught by you *when you learn how*. For some examples: Lake Geneva, a well-known Chicagoland playground, is rated as one of the top ten waters in the country as a potential producer of a new world record Walleye. Our Sage of Okauchee Lake, Ray Schroeder, has proof of 12-15 lb. walleyes caught from his lake — and stories of much bigger ones. We believe him. A few busted lines convinced us.

Veteran Wisconsin and Illinois fishermen will remember that we **KNEW** there were huge lake trout in Wisconsin's Big Green Lake, and that men tried in vain for over 30 years to catch them, until: some years ago a former Army Major came along with a new method **THAT WORKED** and *he* caught them. News of the method spread and today is public knowledge. Today, many men know how to catch the huge lake trout of Big Green Lake. *The fish were there all the time*—and we knew they were there — but we didn't know how to catch them. It is that way with those big walleyes — until now.

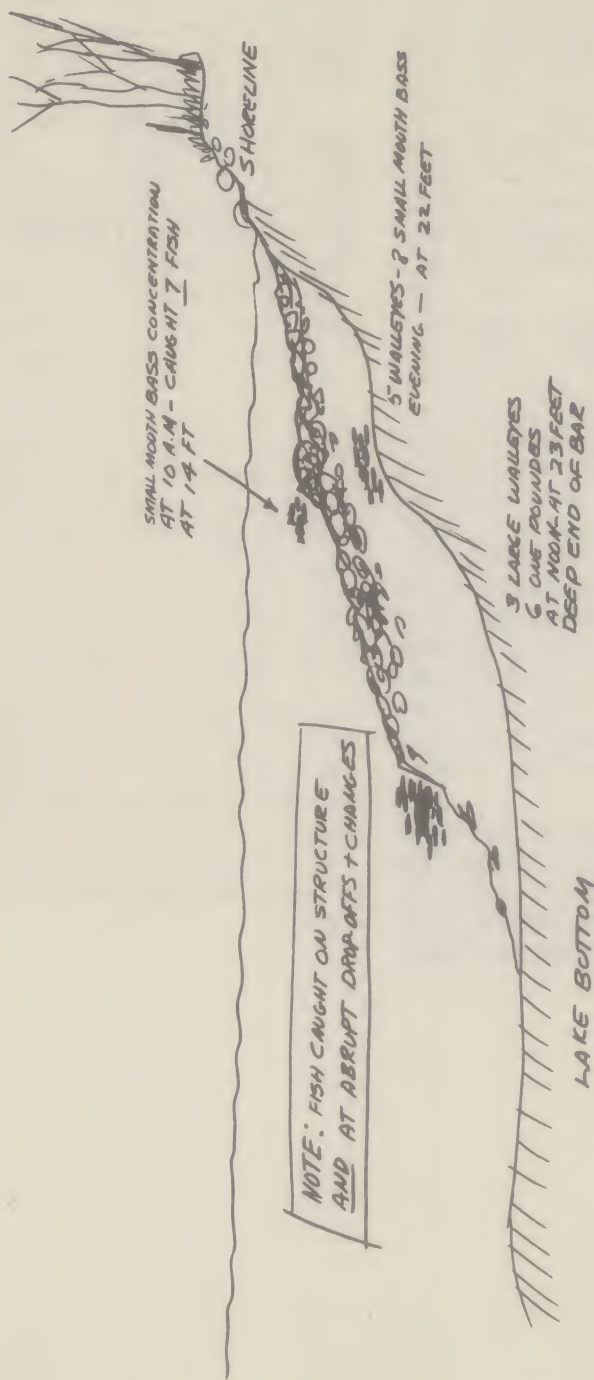
A short time ago, I talked with Bill Baumgarten, veteran guide and resort owner on Wisconsin's famed Chippewa Flowage. We talked about the 1967 spring walleye run and of how a friend had seen walleyes in a shallow creek leading into one of the rivers

that flows into a nearby body of water. He said the big walleyes were stacked like cordwood in that shallow creek. Those of us who know Bill, know that he is a very cautious man in everything he says and does—especially about fish stories. If anything, he tends to play *down* stories of big fish. However, his 30 years of fishing and guiding experience have taught him that there are fish in our lakes that defy man's imagination . . . and surely have defied man's ability to catch them. Like our fish biologists, Bill knows that the truth about the big fish in our lakes is so fantastic that no one has to lie about big fish—the truth is *actually more exciting than any fiction story could ever be*. What about the walleyes that Bill reports in the 1967 spring run? They ran up to 36 inches, he said, and that would have to put them in the 15-18 pound class! Let's be coldly logical—in any fertile body of water, why shouldn't some fish continue to grow and grow, until they die of old age? Certainly, *few people* ever stop their growth by catching them!

We know a responsible guy named Louis Hirschinger, who manages the American Legion Post at 6922 W. Orchard St., Milwaukee. Louis is a skin diver, a good one. He dives Lake Ocon-

omowoc near Milwaukee. He will tell you that in all of his dives he has only seen these huge walleyes a few times—and always at the same, two, small spots. They are only there occasionally . . . like big, old logs, lying tight up against a deep drop-off . . . always at the same place. This is a small spot, surrounded by acres and acres of empty water. Here's what Louis had to say about this experience:

"I just about lost my mind the first time I saw them. I had been diving quite some time; had found bass at 15-17 feet, and had just about given up on depths below this. Still, there was one structure, an underwater point, with a good break at 35 feet. Surrounding it was water of 50 to 60 feet depth. It nagged me, it looked so good. Then, that day, there they were. I will never forget it. *Huge fish, longer than my arm*. I'm within three feet of them but can barely make them out because of the very dim light. They ignored me. They were finning just enough to keep out of reach. Beyond that, they didn't move much. Then, before my eyes they melted away into the outer darkness of the deep water that surrounded us. Where do they go? Why and how do they move? I wish I knew!"



LAKE PROFILE. FIELD NOTES — 29 SMALL MOUTH BASS AND WALLEYES CAUGHT AUG 21, 1966
FISH FOLLOW STRUCTURE: TO FIND THE FISH, YOU MUST FIRST FIND STRUCTURE.

(Eagle Knob Lodge, Lake Owen, Bayfield County, Wisconsin)

CHAPTER IV

HOW WALLEYES MOVE

How Walleyes Move

You can't catch fish that aren't there! Fishing is hunting. A lake is at least 95% empty water. Find the 5% water that has fish, that's the trick. You can find them by the SYSTEMATIC elimination of empty waters where the fish are NOT, in order to find where the fish are. You do this by knowing WHERE to fish.

Study the habits of the largemouth bass, learn to catch this fish, and you will know how—with certain minor variations—to catch all game fish. In other words, you can learn how to catch walleyes, by first learning how to catch bass! Mr. Largemouth Bass is the universal fish.

Little walleyes, the "cigar-sized" variety, are like pan fish. They can be found anywhere in a lake. They're also pretty easy to catch, in many of our northern lakes. The older and larger the walleye, the more reluctant he is to leave the deep water. Walleyes larger than 2 or 3 pounds, are rarely found in water shallower than 8 to 10 feet. (The exception to this will be the very early days of spring or the very late days of fall.)

Big walleyes prefer a clean bottom—rock, sand, or gravel. They will not lie on weeds, muck or trash. Their home is the deep water, they spend most of their time in their deep water home or "Sanctuary." Here, they are hard to locate and almost impossible to catch. The depth which they will choose for their Sanctuary will be determined by the clarity of the water and the depth of the lake itself. It is the penetration of the sun's rays into the water that is of

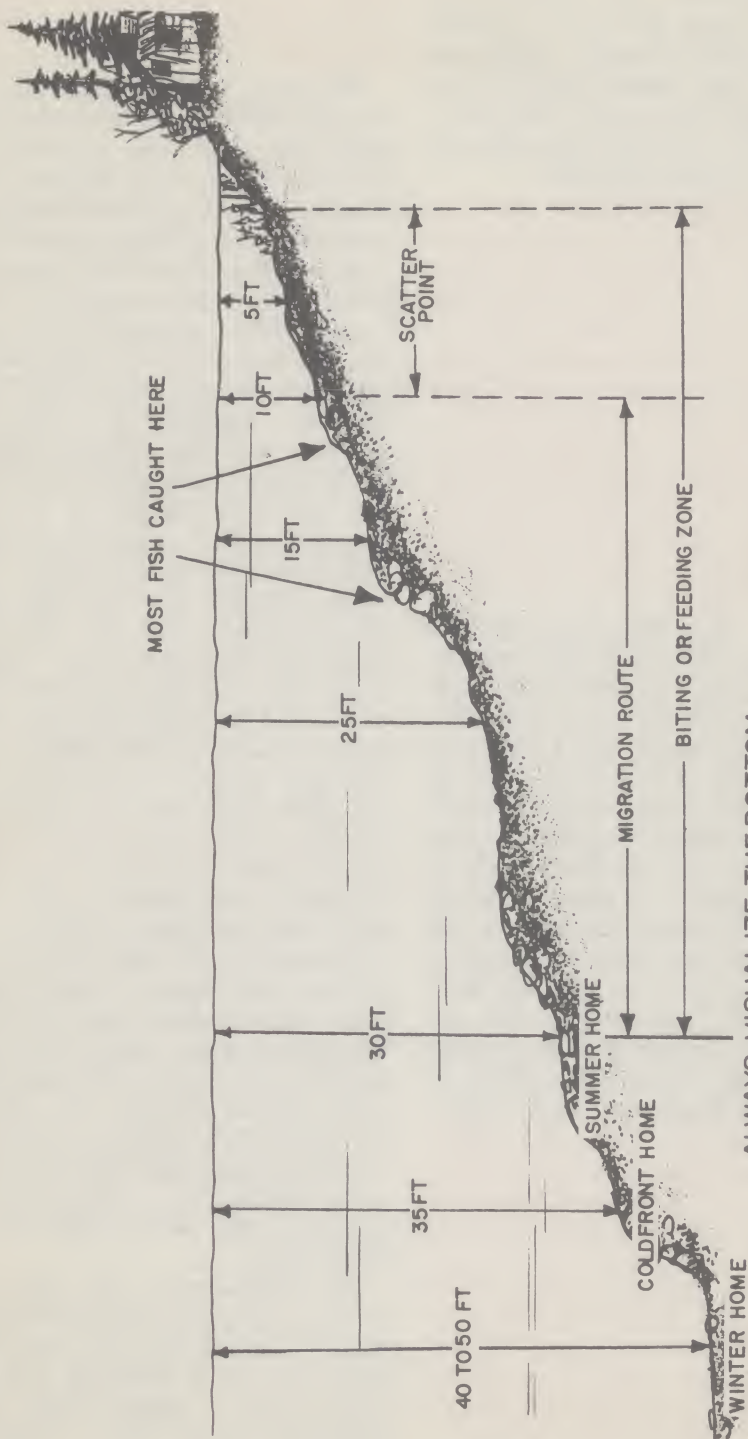
prime importance. The schools of big walleyes will always stay just BELOW the depth of that penetration. Here is an approximate table of fish depths for three kinds of water conditions: (remember, these are approximate depths which are given in order to help you think through the conditions on your favorite lake or lakes):

	Sun Penetra- tion To	Fish Will Be Caught To	No Fish, No Oxygen
Very clear lakes	25-30 ft.	to 45 ft.	50 ft.
Clear lakes	17-25 ft.	to 35 ft.	25-40 ft.
Dingy lakes	3-10 ft.	to 17 ft.	15-25 ft.

The Sanctuary will almost always be deeper than 30 feet. On lakes shallower than this, it will be the deepest part of the lake.

If you are uncertain about the clarity of your lake, you can test it. This test should be made near mid-day, when the sun is bright and unobstructed by clouds, and the water is calm. A rough water surface, obviously, will lessen the penetration of the sun's rays.

Here's how you do it. Lower a white, china plate into the water. You will be surprised at how far down you can see it! When it just disappears from sight, measure that length of line. You will have reached the limit of the



ALWAYS VISUALIZE THE BOTTOM

THIS SKETCH SHOW DEPTHS THAT FISH INHABIT IN CLEAR WATER. IN MURKY WATER, THEY JUST LIVE AND MOVE MORE SHALLOW.

(Lake Okauchee—a typical close-to-a-big-city lake near Milwaukee)

sun's penetration. The walleyes will come to a depth just below this point on days which are similar, bright and calm. They may come in shallower on dark, cloudy days—early morning or late evening—or when the surface of the water is broken by waves.

On a normal fishing day (no cold fronts—see Chapter V), the school of big walleyes will leave their deep water Sanctuary once or twice or even three times that day and migrate. This is not a haphazard movement; it always follows the same, clearly marked path or Migration Route unless there is a drastic change in the water level or in the condition of the bottom of the lake. When the fish move to a certain level in one spot, then the fish all over the lake move to the same level on different spots.

Usually these Migrations will take place twice a day, one early and one late in the day. If there is no early Migration, watch for one to take place in the middle of the day, between 10 A.M. and 2 P.M. If this middle of the day Migration occurs, there will sometimes be no further Migration that day.

Migrations can last for as little as 10-15 minutes or as much as several hours. Under certain conditions, a Migration could last nearly all day. Such conditions could, for example, be a dark, cloudy, rainy day — hot and muggy—and perhaps a week or longer since the last cold front. Usually, however, these Migrations will be short.

The Migration Route they follow from their deep water Sanctuary is called Structure and usually consists of a raised bar or ridge. It can also be a rock, sand or gravel bar running through the weeds or bottom muck. This Migration Route will usually be found adjacent to the security of deep water. This path need not necessarily be straight, it can curve one way or another according to the Structure it

follows. Fish usually prefer an "edge"—they will not be found in small holes or troughs.

The school of big walleyes will follow this Migration Route to the point where there is a Break in the Structure. This Break is any change in the Structure such as a drop-off, weed-line or stumps. This first deep water Break—or stopping place—will generally occur anywhere from about 25-35 feet of water. Here the school of Big walleyes will stop for awhile. They might then return to their deep water Sanctuary or, if conditions are to their liking, they will then Migrate further toward the shallows along the Structure. They will continue on Structure until they reach a second Break. Here again they will stop for a time. This second stopping place will generally occur anywhere from 6-15 feet. The depths at which these two stopping places will occur will vary from lake to lake and are dependent upon weed depths, actual drop-offs in the lake bottom, and, of course, on the clarity of the water. Under very favorable conditions, (the hot, rainy, dark day long after the last cold front), the school may follow the Structure a few feet further into the shallows. Under favorable conditions, the fish will move up to this second Break or scatter point. Under good conditions, they will move beyond this scatter point and scatter into the shallows. For most fishermen (who fish the shallows), this will be the "time when the fish are biting."

In the spring, mostly, they may stay in the shallows for a longer period of time than they will during the rest of the season.

The Migration of the larger fish does not usually go up to the scatter point or beyond. On very clear lakes there may be no Migration past the scatter point or shallow break. The presence of "cover" such as weeds or

logs in the shallows may also encourage the fish to move more shallow. Again, the clarity of the water will determine the depth at which fish are found.

Suddenly, the fish are gone. It is as though someone pulled a switch and turned off a light. Where did they go? Back home, to deep water, to their Sanctuary—which means “safe place.” When will they move again? In 4-12 hours, if conditions remain the same.

What does all this mean? If you will search out their Migration Routes—find the Stopping Places—and BE THERE WHEN THE SCHOOL MOVES IN—you will have the most fantastic fishing experience of your life. You will enjoy fishing that's out of this world—literally, a lunger on almost every cast! Impossible? A dream?

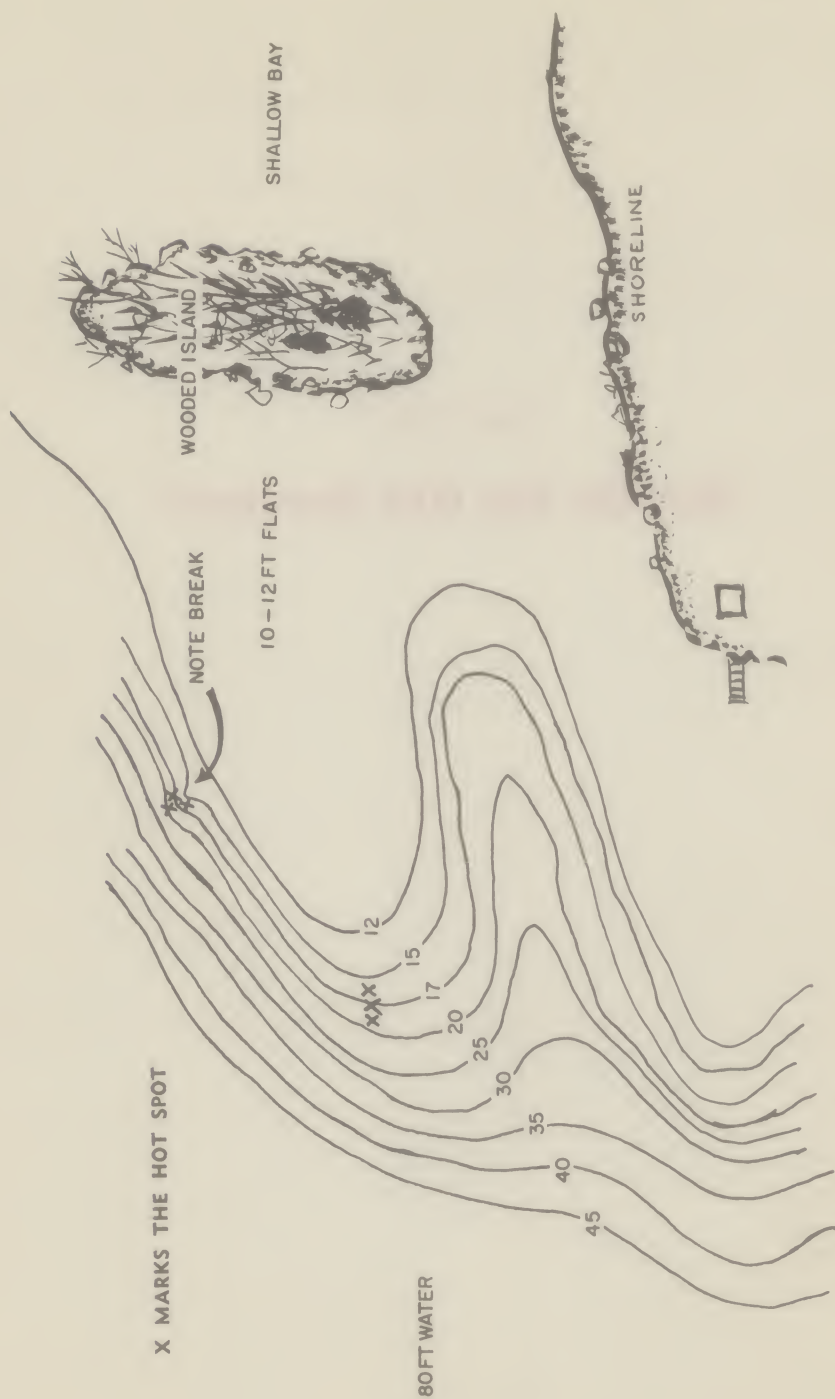
Not to me. I've experienced this hundreds of times in my fishing career. It's not a dream to hundreds of readers of Fishing Facts in 45 states who've written to tell us of such experiences. And it can happen to you.

You are smarter than any fish. In fact no fish ever had an original thought in his life. Fish are creatures of habit and instinct. They don't think, *they react*. They react to certain conditions of water and light, and temperature and bottom Structure, etc. Their movements need not be a mystery to you because *you can think* and you can learn what makes them react, and you can then predict their reactions . . . and their movements.

Do you know what happens then? *You catch 'em!*

CHAPTER V

How Do You Find Structure?



How Do You Find Structure?

You work at it. And who likes work?

Well, you've been working at your present system for years — and how many fish did it get you? If you're among the 95% of all fishermen, you rarely get worthwhile catches of big fish and you've been fishing for years! Be terribly honest with yourself — you're not talking to me — you're talking only to yourself. Does that statement fit you? Or do *you* go out each time literally EXPECTING to make a limit catch and usually succeed?

If not, why not spend a few fishing days working at a system that really pays off—a system based on the habits of the fish themselves? It can produce results for you like you've never experienced in all your life!

Actually, once you believe that the fish are there and that their movements can be predicted, finding Structure is not work at all—it's a series of fascinating discoveries! And you will continue to make exciting discoveries about your lake's Structure almost every time you go out fishing, for as long as you fish that lake. Like Tennis or Bowling or Golf, fishing is a sport in which you can continue to improve and improve, down through all the years you are enjoying "playing the game."

Structure — and that's what this chapter is all about — is that part of the lake bottom extending from deep to shallow water which has some unusual feature that distinguishes it from the surrounding bottom area. The difference may be slight and not always easy for you to detect, at first, but *the fish will detect the difference.*

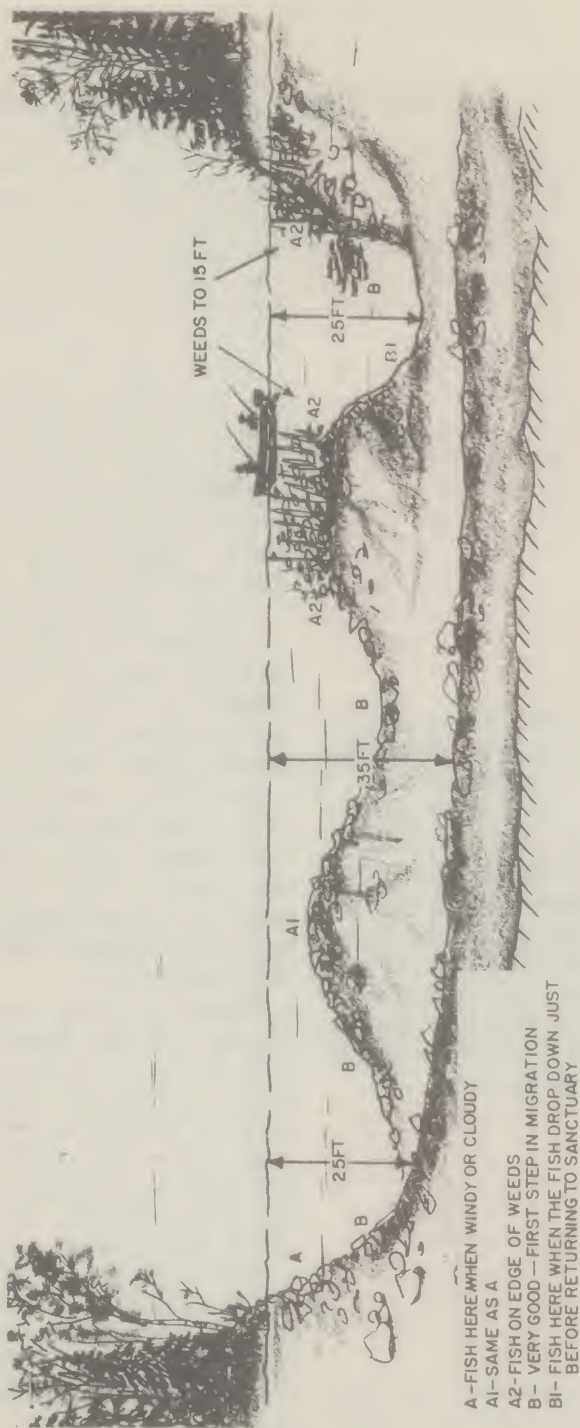
Often the nearby shore will give clues to the Structure of a lake. A point of land usually indicates the presence

of an underwater bar leading out to deep water from that point. A high steep bank usually indicates a rapid or sharp drop-off of the lake bottom along that shore. The search for Structure in your favorite lake will probably require some careful work with an electronic depth finder, or a weighted and measured line on a reel, or a measured anchor rope. It may take some time to locate the drop-offs or Breaks that are the hot spots to which the schools of big walleyes migrate. Once you find these spots, however, they will never change unless the lake level or bottom changes, so you can return to these spots time and time again.

A good contour map of your lake is an invaluable fish-catching tool. This cannot be stressed too hard. Wisconsin anglers are fortunate in that most of the major lakes in that state have been mapped. These Wisconsin lake maps are available at modest cost. (For a list of the 1,100 Wisconsin lake maps that are available, send a self-addressed return envelope with 10c postage attached to it, to the Clarkson Map Company, 724 Desnoyer Street, Kaukauna, Wisconsin 54130.)

Examine your lake map closely, if you are fortunate enough to get one. Look for bars that stretch from the shallows all the way to deep water. Look for a Break or drop-off at the ends of these bars. Look for irregular Breaks in the contour lines. Look for the contour lines that come tightly together, these indicate a steep drop-off. Contour lines that are far apart indicate a gradual slope.

If a contour map of your favorite lake is not available, you will have to find these Structures for yourself. How to start? Examine the shore line for clues and test the water to see if the



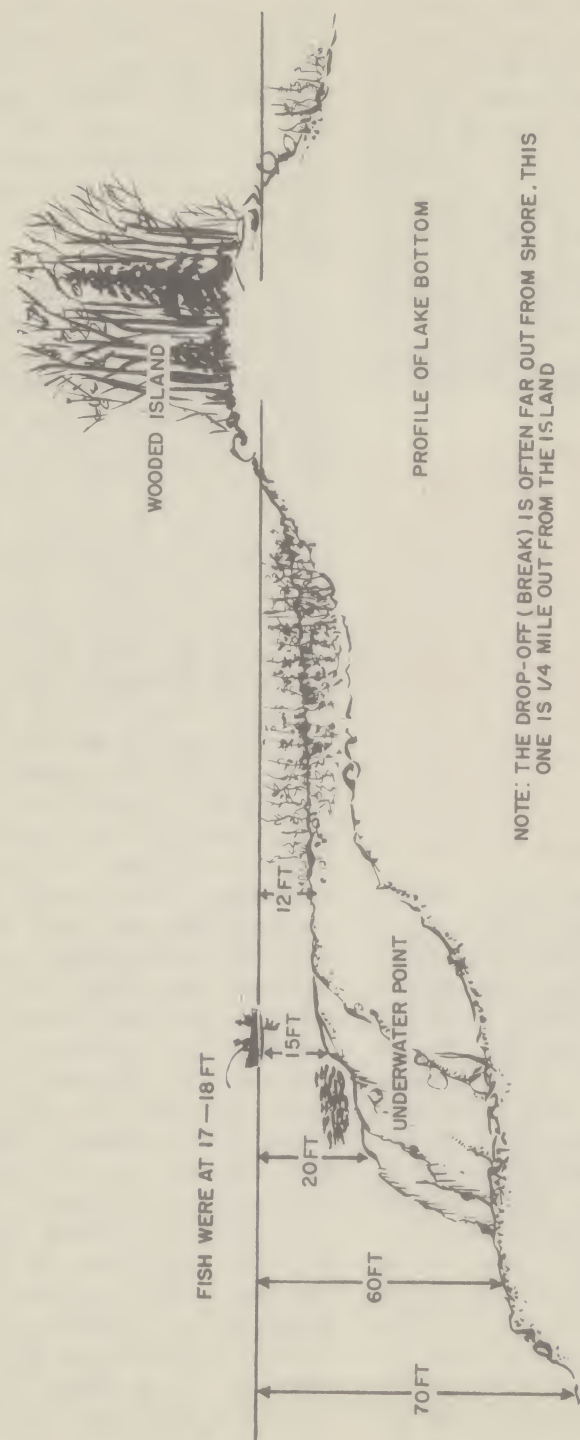
lake bottom follows these shore line clues. If you are the owner of an electronic depth finder (Lo-K-Tor), your job will be made much easier and your findings more precise. (Be sure to read the February 1967 issue of Fishing Facts to learn how you can determine the SHAPE of various types of underwater Structures by the use of a Lo-K-Tor and floating markers.) Two of the illustrations in this book will show you how a Lo-K-Tor and floating markers can be used to determine the shape of a "sunken island."

Nearly every lake will have one or two major Breaks that extend all around the lake. This might be due to some geological feature, such as a layer of hard rock underlying the whole area, 15 feet or so under the soil and therefore 10-12 feet under the surface of the water. Such a Break could also be the weedline, which is usually determined by the penetration of the sun's rays into the water. Look for Breaks on the Break . . . the places where the smooth line of this major break is broken by sharp points or pockets.

You should always carry a few of these floating markers in the boat with you, they are useful tools for a number of different purposes. The simplest form of a floating marker is one you can make yourself with about 40 feet of strong line, tied to a heavy weight or a dipsey sinker. Attach the other end of the line to a flat, plastic bottle—such as a quart plastic bottle used for outboard motor oil. Wind the line around the flat sides of the bottle, and attach a stout rubber band to the sinker. With this rubber band, you can hold the sinker and line in place against the sides of the bottle, until you wish to use the marker. Then you slip off the rubber band, and toss out the whole thing. The weight will strip line

off the flat sides of the bottle until the weight has reached the bottom of the lake. The flat shape of the bottle prevents any more line from stripping off than is needed to reach the bottom at that spot. Automatically, such a marker will adjust itself to whatever depth you wish to mark. (Flat blocks of styro-foam also work fine.)

You can use these floating markers to learn the *shape* of underwater structures, as shown in the illustrations, and to pin-point your hot spots. If you catch a sizable fish in deep water (10 feet or more), you know you must be close to a school. Throw out a marker to mark the spot. Cast the immediate area, especially that leading to deeper water. When you find another fish or two and have thrown out markers, those markers will have pin-pointed the location of the school. Once you have located one of these hot spots, you can return to it time and time again and catch fish, whenever they have migrated in. Don't throw your markers right ON the spot, but always the *same* distance to the same side of the spot—such as 10 feet to the right, or 10 feet closer to the shore. These hot spots will usually be small—very small. Sometimes a hot spot will be no bigger than a dining room table! Make sure you pin-point this hot spot for future reference. One way to pin-point a hot spot, is to line it up with several shore line points, using the rifle sight method. Pretend you are aiming a rifle at the shore line, and move the rifle until you can line it up in such a way that you could hit two separate points with the same bullet—such as the right hand side of that boat house with the left side of the front door on the house behind it. Then swing the sights of your imaginary rifle to another shore, and line up two similar spots on that shore. You have thus formed two imaginary



FISH WERE AT 17 — 18 FT

lines which intersect at the point where you are now located—which is your hot spot. If you own a Lo-K-Tor, you can be even more precise. Note the exact depth, (it will be a drop-off, of course), and line up with only one such set of points on the shore. By this method, you need only motor in from the deep *along this line* until your Lo-K-Tor indicates you have reached the drop-off, and presto, you're there! These hot spots are tiny, you'd better believe it! Five or 10 feet away is too far—no fish!

The illustrations of bottom Structure that appear in this book will give you further information. Explore your lake BEFORE you start fishing. THINK in terms of Structure, Breaks, Weed Lines, Drop-Offs and Migration Routes. These are the keys to finding the schools of Big walleyes. Bear in mind this important fact: you *can* find some likely-looking Structure without fish, but you won't find Big fish without structure!

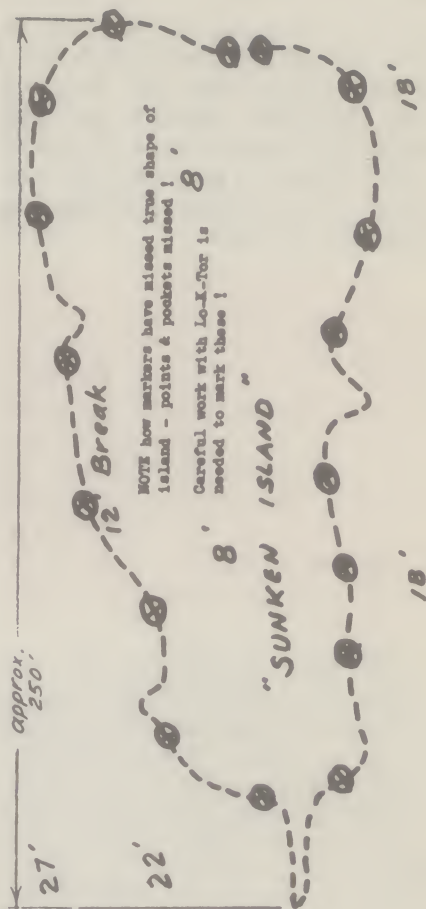
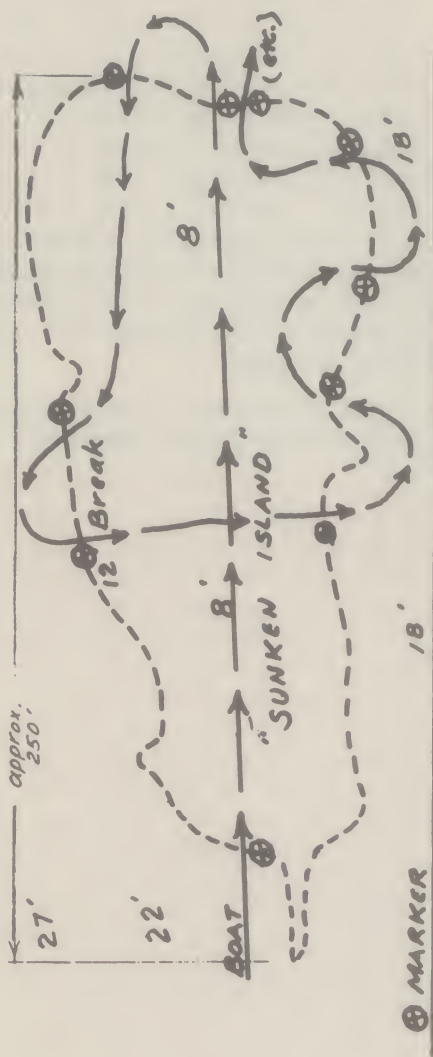
Use your intelligence and your imagination to devise further ways of locating underwater structure. Suppose you want to fish a sharp corner of a long, underwater bar that stretches hundreds of yards out from shore? Such a spot can be mighty hard to find. However, you can locate one edge of the bar and follow it by marking *that* edge with floating markers. When this edge ends, you can *mark the line of the end of the bar* which runs in another direction, and so determine where *the two lines intersect* in the sharp point you are looking for.

To help you find a tiny spot again on a lake where there are no distinguishing landmarks on shore (such as a heavily wooded shoreline where every tree looks like every other tree), you might be able to put out a per-

manent marker for the season, or for the length of your vacation on that lake. Here, a small stick of wood tied with fairly light line to a sinker, will do the trick. Use this carefully, however, for a large marker will be a threat to the safety of other boats should they strike it—and a large marker will be noticed and picked up quickly by other boats out of curiosity. This can't be used on a spot where there is heavy water traffic because the marker will soon be picked up or cut by other boats. Be sure to remove any such markers at the end of your vacation, or at the end of the season.

Here is a summary of the important lessons of these last two chapters:

Keep in mind the importance of the penetration of the sun's rays into the water. Early or late in the day, the sun strikes the water at a flat angle, and the penetration is far less than at high noon with the sun almost directly overhead. Sometimes this can change suddenly. For example, you might be fishing one of your favorite hot spots—without results—on a bright, clear day on which the surface of the water is calm and glassy. Suddenly, the clouds cover the sun *or* a breeze springs up and suddenly, the fish are there! What happened? The fish had been waiting, further out on Structure, conditions were not to their liking so they came in no shallower. The clouds over the sun cut down on the amount of light at this hot spot and they felt safe to move in. Or, the sudden breeze caused the surface of the water to ripple or even become choppy and the penetration of the sun's rays through that rough water surface was considerably less than through the previously calm, glassy surface. *Keep this all-important matter of light always in your mind.* It will help you to react to conditions the



way fish themselves react! I'm almost tempted to say "think like a fish"—but that wouldn't be true. Fish don't think, they react!

Here's an example of what we mean: Suppose you're fishing a clear-water lake with major breaks at 21 feet and at 12 feet. If the day is bright and the water calm, you wouldn't expect to find the big walleyes migrating as far as the 12 foot break. You'd expect to find them at the 21 foot break. Should the day be dark and rainy and the water choppy (and a long time since the last cold front), you might find that they've migrated up to the 12 foot break . . . further along structure *because conditions were more to their liking*.

The reactions of fish need not be a mystery to you. Their reactions and behaviour follow certain patterns and are predictable. Understand the conditions under which they move and feed in their shadowy world, and you can understand and predict their movements.

Here are the major points to remember:

- A. Big walleyes (over 2-3 pounds) are incredibly shy and finicky. They are bunched tightly in schools. They are easily spooked. These schools of big fish follow predictable behaviour patterns.
- B. The BIG walleyes make their home in deep water, 30 feet or more. Here they are safe in their Sanctuary, almost impossible to locate or to catch.
- C. Once or twice a day, depending upon conditions, the school of BIG walleyes will Migrate *toward* the shallows. Usually this occurs twice a day, early and late. Sometimes it may only occur once a day, at about mid-day.
- D. The schools of BIG walleyes will always follow the same path on

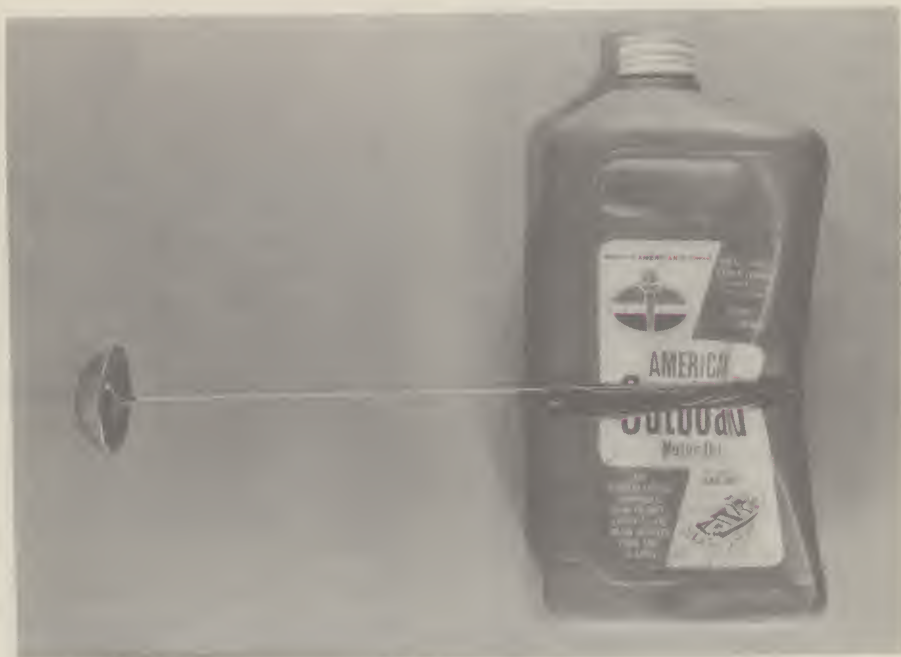
their Migration—a ridgelike bar or Structure extending from deep water toward the shallows. They prefer an "edge," rather than holes or troughs. This Structure might also be a clean rock, sand or gravel bar running through an area of weeds or bottom muck.

- E. They will usually pause in their Migration at two Breaks or drop-offs along this Structure, one deep and one shallower. Such Breaks can be actual steps or drop-offs, the sides of a sunken island, the edge of the weeds, etc. The length of time that they pause at these Stopping Places will vary from minutes to several hours, but usually will be short.
- F. The schools of BIG walleyes avoid the sun's rays—*always staying just below the deepest penetration of the water by those rays*. This depth will vary from lake to lake according to the clarity of the water, the smoothness of the water surface, and the angle and brightness of the sun.
- G. BIG walleyes prefer a clean bottom: rock, sand or gravel. They will not lie on muck, weeds or trash.
- H. Structure is any unusual change in the lake bottom that distinguishes it from the surrounding bottom areas.
- I. To locate hot spots, look for drop-offs, (tight contour lines on a map), bars, ridges, sunken islands and submerged peaks rising out of deep water, points and pockets that break the otherwise smooth lines of an underwater contour line, the ends of underwater bars, rock piles, sand or gravel bars running through weeds or bottom muck. These hot spots are generally much

smaller than you'd expect them to be—oftentimes as small as a dining room table. Miss this tiny spot and you will miss the fish.

- J. You are smarter than any fish. Condition yourself to react the way he reacts to water conditions and you can predict his movements!

A final word: the bigger the walleye, the more timid and wary he becomes. Don't expect the vicious strike of a hungry lunker—he will take the bait with the gentlest of tugs—less than a weed. And those huge trophy fish that our lakes contain . . . are the most easily spooked of all. After all, they didn't get that big by being blind or stupid!



"Here's one kind of floating marker you can make yourself. You can also use a gallon gas can or a block of styrofoam—just make sure it floats and has flat sides."

CHAPTER VI

To Know A Lake—Concentrate

To Know A Lake — Concentrate

Far too many fishermen roam far and wide, trying this lake or that — in a never-ending search for that "hot lake"—where their fishing efforts will *finally* be successful. Rarely do they fish the same lake twice. Rarely do they catch fish. It is not *just* coincidence—it is cause and effect. How can you catch fish that you can't find? How can you find fish unless you know where to look?

I practice what I preach. I concentrate. One lake close to home I fish often—Okauchee Lake. One lake in northern Wisconsin I fish when I go on vacation—Lake Owen.

Most of the time I fish Okauchee—it's the most convenient. Catching a limit of largemouth bass and some nice stringers of walleyes during the summer of 1966 was not uncommon. Hundreds of Wisconsin and Illinois fishermen saw these fish at Ray Schroeder's Boat Rental — and some of these men even saw these fish being caught. There was no fake about this — nor was it magic. I did the same in '67, '68 and '69.

You can do the same — and from your lake. Okauchee is not a super lake. It's typical of lakes all over this country—close to a big city—loaded with heavy traffic, speedboats, water skiers, and fishermen. Some very good fishermen regard it as a difficult lake to fish successfully. That's one of the factors that make it typical of so many other lakes in America.

Often I caught these fish: four, five, even six pound bass, when anchored in a cluster of boats. Sometimes it seemed that I was catching them almost out from under the other boats . . . while they caught nothing. They

were fishing blindly — I was fishing Structure that I KNEW. I use a contour map, a Lo-K-Tor, and eight year's information on Structure — plus a knowledge of fish habits — plus the method known to readers of Night-crawler Secrets (Book No. 1) and this book. These other fishermen were using the "dumb luck system." It was hardly a contest.

How long does it take to really get to know a lake? I don't know the answer to that question. I've been concentrating on Okauchee for the last eight years, one or two days a week from early spring to late fall. In 1966 I discovered five new hot spots — I expect to discover more each year. I will probably never discover them all — no matter how long I live or how many times I fish this typical lake within 20-30 minutes of a large city (Milwaukee). This is why I still find every fishing trip an exciting experience of discovery and exploration . . . plus catching big fish.

There is nothing that I do that you cannot do. I am not a "super fisherman." The methods I use are available to you through the pages of Night-crawler Secrets (Book No. 1) and this Book No. 2 which you are now reading. They are further revealed to the readers of Fishing Facts & Secrets published by the Northwoods Publishing Co., Inc., P.O. Box No. 4169, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53210). (See page 79.)

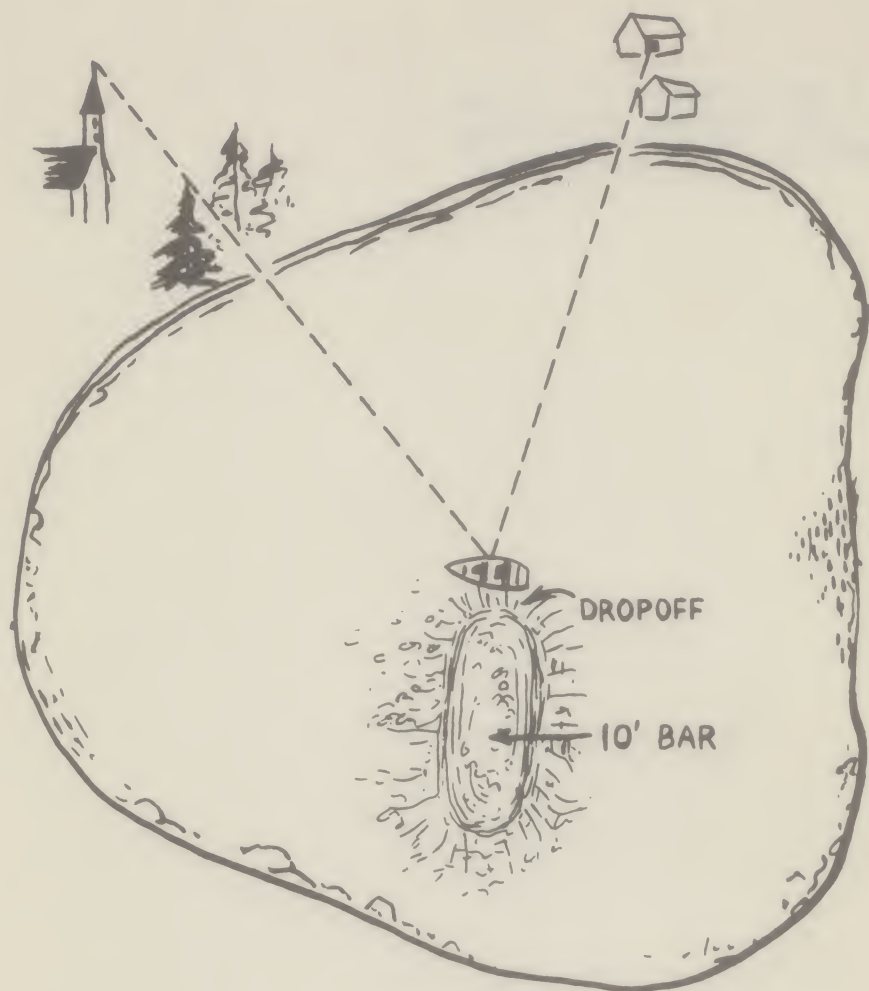
No two bodies of water are exactly the same in depth, water clarity, weed growth, motorboat traffic, bottom structure and fish populations. As you get to know your lake, you may discover variations from what you had expected

to find. Don't let this confuse you. There are reasons for these variations, even though they may not be apparent to you at this time. It's like the spoken English language. There are rules—but there are variations in pronunciation and usage which occur in different parts of England, Canada, Australia, and the United States.

A lake is something like a woman — subtle, mysterious, and oftentimes exciting. An occasional "blind date"

produces only superficial knowledge. Courtship and marriage produce a deeper understanding of her limitless complexities—and there's always more to discover.

If you are one of those fishermen who engage in "blind dates" with various lakes, settle down and concentrate your efforts on getting to know one (or two). It will pay off in heavy stringers of limit catches most every time you go out. Believe it!



CHAPTER VII

THE WEATHER & FISHING

The Weather & Fishing

First off — we're not concerned with wind or calm, rain or shine, heat or cold, rising or falling barometer! Why not? Well, these all have a relatively minor effect on fishing and you can ADJUST your fishing accordingly . . . as was pointed out in Chapter III, the penetration of the sun's rays into the water determines the depth at which fish will be found. By now you must think that we're saying that weather has NO effect on fishing. Not so—we said you can ADJUST to all these conditions and *still* catch a lot of big fish. What's left? The cold front . . . that miserable, pesky, weather condition that absolutely ruins fishing — sometimes for days!

What's a cold front? It's not always easy to recognize a *mild* cold front—you might even have to call the weather bureau to make sure if one came through. However, you'll easily recognize a SEVERE cold front when we describe it for you. It's the ordinary ones that fool you.

Here's an imaginary situation — it's the middle of July and we've had a heat wave for the last week. Each day has been hotter than the last, temperatures have ranged from the low to middle nineties, and some of the days have been terribly muggy besides. Real uncomfortable weather, this has been, but fishing has been excellent (for those who know how to fish Structure!). For the last few nights, the weather man on the late TV show has been talking about a mass of cool Canadian air that's headed our way to bring us relief. "It ought to reach us about Saturday afternoon," the man tells us. To people suffering from the heat, Saturday afternoon can't come soon enough. Saturday afternoon finds you out on the lake, fishing, and you

have a clear view of the western and northern skies. Sure enough, sometime that afternoon you see a dark haze far off in the western skies and you watch it come closer and closer. A breeze springs up and suddenly temperatures start to drop. From 94 it drops to 76 in less than an hour. The wind becomes stronger and colder and comes out of the northwest. It blows harder and harder and starts to rain. You're forced off the lake by high waves. There are flashes of lightning in the sky and the crash of thunder. The rain really pours down. By now the thermometer has fallen to 64 degrees. Night comes, and the storm continues through most of the night. The next morning dawns cool and crisp and clear. Not a cloud in the sky. The temperature is a cool 68 degrees. The wind is out of the northwest at about 8 miles an hour. What a wonderful relief from the heat! It's a real pleasure to be out on the lake — it's refreshing! You start fishing . . . and fish all day. Not a bite! Oh yes, you seemed to accidentally run into a baby wall-eye as big as a cigar, but that was all. *What happened to the fishing?*

That was a cold front — a severe one. It drove the fish off their feed and they are now huddled almost motionless on the bottom of the lake in a Sanctuary that's even deeper than their usual home. They stay there for the next two or three days. If you know where the deep drop-offs are, you might pick up a little straggler or two, but that's all. Fishing is really lousy! You really have to be right on the button to get even the stragglers. Some fishermen will get a few fish while the effect of the cold front lasts . . . they will find them under logs, and other unusual places. Sometimes even the ex-

perts will get skunked.

The effects of a cold front will last until the temperature starts to rise again — or until the skies become cloudy again. The effects of a front like this will probably last for two or three days. If you will think through your experience, you have probably encountered such a cold front at some time or another in your fishing experiences—or you've tried to go fishing the day or so after it hits. Nothing. That's what you caught. Nothing.

After the cold front has passed, fishing will continue to improve until the next cold front hits. The longer between cold fronts, the better the fishing. If you hit a hot, dark, rainy day after a cold front such as the day described when we first caught walleyes on Okauchee Lake (Chapter II), fishing may be fantastic. Sometimes, on such a rare day, the fish will migrate in and stay in for hours—nearly all day. What fishing that will be—out of this world!

We've described a cold front—what effect will cold fronts have that are less severe? About the same. The most damaging cold fronts are those that occur in the middle of summer when the water is warm. When the air temperature falls below the water temperature, fishing stops. That means that cold fronts in October, for example, when the water is already quite cold, will have a lesser effect on fishing than the cold front in the heat of summer. It's that clear blue sky that follows the front. That was why we made the statement at the beginning that some cold fronts will be so slight that you have

to call the weather bureau to make sure that you had one. The effects of a cold front are much more severe on a clear lake than on a dingy one. Worse on lakes than on rivers.

Exceptions to the cold front LAW? None! None that we've ever found or heard about. It IS the law! If a front has come through and the cloud cover continues for a short time after the front has passed, fishing may continue for a few more hours. Should clouds start to appear in the sky a few hours afterwards and the temperature starts to rise, fishing will begin to improve quickly. The effects of the average cold front will last from 12 to 72 hours, usually. What happens when one cold front follows another in rapid succession? Nothing, absolutely nothing, as far as catching fish is concerned. Readers of Fishing Facts will recall that we wrote about 1965 and 1966 as being those kind of years — ones with many successive cold fronts. This is especially unfortunate when weather is favorable during the week when most of us can't go out, and then a cold front comes through on the weekend. That's what happened all over the country in 1965 and 1966.

Knowing this about cold fronts, you may possibly be able to adjust your schedule of fishing trips to avoid them. If not, go anyway, but don't be disheartened. It's a good time to explore Structure and find those Breaks on the Break. Knowing this truth about cold fronts will also keep you from becoming discouraged when you find yourself fishing right after a severe cold front has passed.



"Here I am with Ray Schroeder, the 'Sage of Okauchee' and a double limit of walleyes from that heavily fished lake only 30 miles from a great city—Milwaukee. These fish were tempted by Nightcrawler Secrets as I slowly drifted along Structure, about 22-25 feet deep."

CHAPTER VIII

Tempting the Fish—BITING Versus STRIKING

Tempting the Fish — Biting vs. Striking

The number of times that you will encounter a ravenously hungry school of fish, voraciously devouring any bait you offer, are so few that you had better forget all about the idea. It's a great bonus if it ever happens to you—but don't count on it! Our lakes are loaded with food. Did you ever see a big fish that wasn't well fed? If you've had a picture in your mind about the big lunker walleye that throws caution to the winds and viciously attacks your bait, forget it. He doesn't have to—he gets enough to eat. Rather, keep in mind the gentle "mouthing" of your bait—the "take" that's so gentle that it feels lighter than a weed—the big lunker that's disinterested in almost anything you offer him.

What's the difference between striking and biting. Well, a fish can be *provoked* into striking or *tempted* into biting. Maybe this story will give you the idea: step on a sleeping dog's tail and he will probably "snap" at you. Not because he's hungry and wants to eat you—or because he thinks you might taste good . . . it was an involuntary action that he couldn't even help. He was *provoked*. Fish can be *provoked* into striking a fast moving jig that comes bouncing through the school—before there's even time to be wary, a fish will react and strike that lure. But this book is about nightcrawlers—and that's *tempting* a fish to bite. Imagine, if you will, several couples out to dinner and they've just finished a large and satisfying meal. Perhaps several of the men have lighted a cigar or cigarette. They're full and content. Some joker in the

crowd says: "Hey, let's all have another meal. How's about a porterhouse steak?" They all groan — "forget it!" Someone else says: "There's a dish of chocolate-covered nuts over on that table at the other end of the room." Who needs it? But, the waitress comes by with just such a dish of those luscious, chocolate-covered nuts and passes them around the table, right under the noses of everyone there. What happens? A few—not all—of the people will pick one up and plop it into their mouths. Why? They were *tempted*. Sure, they had enough to eat, but the chocolate-covered nuts looked so delicious and so luscious that a few of the people just couldn't resist the temptation. What's more, the dish of chocolates was passed *right under their noses*—no matter how full they were, it was too *tempting* to resist.

If you can pass a huge, lively, luscious-looking nightcrawler right under the nose of that big, shy lunker walleye . . . and if you present it in the most natural way possible, without hardware, leaders, snaps, swivels and a lot of other junk . . . he might be *tempted* into opening that huge mouth and accepting that tasty morsel . . . no matter how full he might be of his usual food. Get the idea? That's what you're going to do, as a result of the information in these two books about *Nightcrawler Secrets*. You're going to put that irresistible morsel almost right in that lunker's mouth, so that all he has to do is open up and suck it in. *That* fish will end up on your stringer! Would you have him do anything *else*?

CHAPTER IX

Don't Be Ashamed of Using Live Bait

Don't Be Ashamed of Using Live Bait

Big Green Lake in central Wisconsin is one of the largest bodies of water in our state. It's big, clear, cold, and over 200 feet deep. It has a huge population of smallmouth bass . . . but few are ever caught.

A very few fishermen make sensational catches of these smallmouths from Big Green Lake. One of them stopped in to see me, one day. He showed me photos and an ice chest of 10 beautiful-sized smallmouth bass. He talked glowingly of drop-offs, underwater bars and Migrations. It was obvious that he was a man deeply in love with fishing . . . a student of fishing . . . a fisherman of exceptional ability. And, he had the fish to prove it!

It made me feel wonderful just to be exposed to his infectious enthusiasm. Unintentionally, I spoiled it all. I asked him what he caught them on. His face fell and his exuberance vanished. He spoke softly, literally apologizing, as he said, "On nightcrawlers." Even though I assured him that I used

nightcrawlers, too, he continued to think that there was some stigma attached to fishing with nightcrawlers. This is ridiculous. It's a crime!

I know where he picked up this foolish idea—from a few of the tackle companies and their ads . . . and from a few of the sports writers. They pretend to look down their noses at live bait fishermen. So do some of the "purists." It seems that unless you fish in the most difficult and impossible manner — and with artificials — you are not a "sport." In fact, the logical conclusion of this illogical nonsense is that a "sport" must be someone who *never* catches fish! Most fishermen do use live bait. Forty million fishermen know it too. The idea that "anyone can catch fish by dunking live bait" is stupid. Almost as stupid as the statement that catching fish is NOT the reason for going fishing! If anyone has got you thinking this way—forget it! It's almost as stupid as saying that the purpose of farming is *not* to grow crops!

CHAPTER X

**Condition Crawlers to Make Them
Irresistible to Big Walleyes**

Condition Crawlers to Make Them Irresistible to Big Walleyes

After Book I came out I began to get letters and phone calls, even long distance calls, asking about crawlers. I guess that I didn't give enough details about the "right crawler" in that book.

I always use what is called the Canadian Crawler as opposed to what is called the Giant African Crawler. Actually the Canadian worm is much the larger — and can be *made* even larger and that's what you want. Big, big crawlers.

Canadian Crawlers are those that you buy in any bait shop in our mid-western states, or that you pick for yourself in most parts of the country. They must be kept cool.

African crawlers are merchandised mostly in the south. I guess that they stand up in the heat better. I don't know that this is true for sure. I do know that I don't use them. They are too small.

When I go south to Florida, Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, I take along a good supply of Canadian crawlers. I keep them cool in exactly the same way that I do when I go to Canada.

I carry them in a styrofoam chest or two. These chests are about half-full of Weber Worm Bedding. This bedding is covered with wet newspapers. On top of the newspapers I put a couple of cans of that refreezable ice. Then I cover these with some more newspapers.

I carry extra cans of this fluid and refreeze some each night. When I put these in my chest I wrap them in newspaper. Newspapers are great insulation. One can is wrapped thinly. This can releases the cold somewhat rapidly (in about 6 hours) the other can is wrapped with several thicknesses of newspaper, and releases the cold slowly

(about 12 to 18 hours). I have no trouble.

BUT DO NOTE THIS. This is my storage box. This will not make crawlers big and fat. It will keep crawlers a long time but you find them getting smaller—too much room for exercise, I guess. Anyway, I always *condition* some each night. ALWAYS!

A thermo picnic bag full of cottage cheese boxes is my fishing weapon. These cottage cheese boxes are what *really condition* my crawlers. I pack some each night that I'm fishing. Before I start a trip I pack a couple of dozen boxes. This takes about ten minutes. It is worth it.

Here is what I do. Into the cottage cheese box, I put about 2 inches of Weber Worm Bedding, then a layer of crawlers (about 18 to 20). Then I fill the rest of the box with wet, crumpled-up newspapers. I put in enough to create *some* pressure when the cover is put on.

With this pressure, the crawlers can't move too much, besides where would they go? They just absorb water. In a day or two they are big and lively.

Sometimes I put these small boxes in a refrigerator. Sometimes right in my picnic bag. Anyway, I keep them cool.

If I can help it, I never waste my time by fishing newly purchased crawlers. I always try to *condition* them first.

I never fish small crawlers.

Some men like to pick their own crawlers, and you can, if you have the time. If you do, then pick a bunch of them. Put them in your chest on top of the bedding. Let the injured ones die o. —you will injure some. The healthy ones will burrow themselves down. (Never cover worms up with

bedding.) Get the dead ones out quickly. Then, before you go fishing, pack some in cottage cheese boxes. I used to pick a lot of them.

Now I buy my crawlers in boxes of 500. Out of these I find about 300 that are large enough. The rest I throw away. My fishing time costs more than crawlers.

Sometimes when I run out, I buy them by the dozen. Here, too, I throw away about 1/3 of them. Too small.

The important things to remember are:

1. Use only the largest Canadian crawlers.

2. Those in your storage box will thrive, but gradually get smaller — too much room to exercise in (maybe).

3. Keep all crawlers cool. 40 to 60 degrees.

4. Pack those that you are going to use in small containers. Pack them tight with quite wet newspapers on top so that they can absorb a lot of water and expand (grow big).

It may take you a little while to get the "knack" of this *conditioning* process. If the newspaper is too wet, you end up with a soggy mess . . . if it's too dry, no results. I get the paper soaking wet, then squeeze some of the water out with my hands before packing it on top of the worms in the cottage cheese cartons.

5. Keep your crawlers cool when out in a boat. I use a thermo picnic bag. Crawlers that you have *conditioned* into big, fat, lively critters will quickly *wilt* into semi-lifeless skinny worms, if kept in an unprotected can or box in the boat.

I usually use 2 cans of that re-freezable ice in my thermo bag out in

the boat, too. One can is wrapped heavily in newspapers, one wrapped lightly. If I'm only going to be out on the lake for a short time—or if the weather is cool—I might use only a single can of re-freezable ice in my thermo bag. In cold weather I don't need any, of course — but in hot weather I need two such cans. Conditioned crawlers **MUST** be kept cool. And, for heaven's sake, once you have a carton of conditioned crawlers opened for use in the boat, **KEEP THEM OUT OF THE HOT SUN**. Use your head on this—there's nothing very complicated about it.

6. Pack only a few, 18 to 20 in a container. You don't want to handle them, or rummage around in them any more than you have to. Handling crawlers leaves a "man scent" and it causes them to lose that desirable liveliness.

This is about it except to remember that this is the recipe. Just having a recipe doesn't bake a prize cake. You must practice. I lost lots of crawlers in the beginning, until I got the hang of it.

I might add again that I tried lots of foods like, margarine, coffee grounds, crusts, oat meal, you name it, I tried it. Just a waste of time. Early Bird bedding does the job, but it does take a little getting used to.

When fishing, change crawlers often. Don't waste your precious time fishing a dead crawler. If a blue gill nips your crawler, throw it away. He left a smell on it—pay attention to this. You will catch some big fish, even if you don't, but you will catch ten times as many if you do what I say.

Smell is important. I use rubber gloves to mix the bedding and to pack

my boxes. Also, I'm careful not to handle my crawlers more than I have to.

Art Mercier, famous outdoorsman of WBBM Radio, Chicago, recommends washing your hands with liquid Tincture of Green Soap—available from a

druggist. This I do, too.

Sound like a lot of work? It isn't, really, and I do catch fabulous fish that won't touch other crawlers. They find mine to be *that irresistible temptation* they just can't pass up. It will put big walleyes on your stringer too!

THE CRAWFORD KNOT



STEP 1.



2.



3.



4.

CHAPTER XI

NOW, TO GET 'EM ON YOUR STRINGER!

"Now, To Get 'Em On Your Stringer!"

Most of us quickly forget small details—so do I. However, it is the small but terribly important details of the method covered in Book No. 1 that make the big difference in lots of big fish—a few fish—or no fish at all. That's the difference! Here's where we left off in Book No. 1:

1. Hook the crawler *only once* and through the tip of the nose—not through the sex band, not looped! Let it stream out naturally.
2. Use a single hook—not a worm gang—not a harness. I use Mustad Aberdeen Bronze Hooks exclusively and buy them in boxes of 100. They cost a little less than 1c each.
3. Tie hooks directly to the line with the Crawford Figure 8 knot (as shown on page 50), and snip off the protruding end of the line.
4. If you don't test your knots after you tie them—or if you forget to tie new knots about every half hour of fishing . . . you deserve to lose the fish you will lose. Then you won't forget! Knots wear out fast—the line will almost always break first at the knot . . . it's the weakest point of the whole system.
5. Use fine, monofilament line . . . 6 lb. at the heaviest. I always carry rods set up with 4 lb. mono in the boat. It's a pain in the neck—that 4 lb. mono—but it gets more fish. Some fine fishermen I know (like George Pazik, Jack Crawford and Bob Reimer) never use anything BUT 4 lb. line. I use Blue Trilene line, exclusively, and buy it in 1,000 yard spools

to save money. I tried them all.

6. Use small—I said SMALL split shot. A No. 7 with 6 lb. line would be the largest . . . a 3/0 is better. A BB shot or none at all is best with 4 lb. line. The smaller the better. Place the sinker about 18 inches up from the hook. I use Water Gremlins sinkers exclusively—they're in a class by themselves. Patience is a great sinker, too, and completely invisible!

The purpose is to present the crawler with a nearly invisible hook, line and sinker . . . in the most natural manner possible . . . like a free crawler squirming on the bottom . . . an invitation to dine! I said ON the bottom, not near the bottom!

Now bear in mind that you're out to catch the shyest and spookiest fish of all—the big walleye. To get you into the proper frame of mind for this, I'm going to ask you—right now, before you read further—to go back to Book No. 1 and re-read the section starting on page 14, "Jake's Invisible Hook." Then re-read page 18 on "The Retrieve." Then, study the illustrations again on pages 22 and 23. There, got it all in mind! Good! Here we go—here's the picture:

You've pinpointed the structure you want to fish, and your bait and tackle are all ready. You're using super crawlers, light, light tackle, and the school of big walleyes has migrated in to the deep break that lies under you. There they are—down there beyond the reach of light—hundreds of them below you. You're ready to fish? Not yet, there's something missing. You haven't considered RETRIEVE SPEED!

Retrieve SPEED means not just

FAST—it also means SLOW—or no movement at all. Don't get "speed" confused with "action." Action is the wobbling and vibrating of the bait. (In this case, the squirming action of your big super crawler!) Speed refers to the movement of the bait through the water.

There is NO ONE BEST RETRIEVE. There is a rule of thumb—cold water means slow fish and warm water means fast fish. True—most of the time, but not always. Another general rule—walleyes, most of the time but not always, want a little faster and more erratic action than do bass, for example. Sometimes, you have to add a fast jerk or bounce to the bait to excite the walleye . . . sort of like getting his attention. Then, you let the bait sink back—almost motionless—because this spooky, finicky fish doesn't want to move too fast or too far in order to suck that crawler into his enormous mouth. After all—he didn't get that big by being a blind, blundering idiot! He's wary—very wary. It's one of his best means of protection.

Vary your retrieve constantly. How many different retrieves are there? As many as you can think of. You must experiment. No one retrieve is best. You must try many different retrieves on every fishing trip in order to find the one that the big walleyes favor on that occasion. Sometimes only the slightest variation is all it takes to get them to hit. A different twitch, an extra jump, or a little burst of speed.

Here are some examples to help you think of more variations . . . try them in clear, shallow water so that you can observe the movement of your crawler:

- a. A slow, steady bounce.
- b. One or more short jerks and then let it rest. Repeat.
- c. A slow, inching forward on the bottom.

- d. Let your crawler lie motionless on the bottom, and let the line and sinker fall to the bottom and become nearly invisible. The squirming of your super crawler will provide the action.
- e. Same as d. only pick it up and jerk it sharply and let it fall down to rest motionless on the bottom again.
- f. Slide the sinker all the way down to the hook and you have a lead-head jig and nightcrawler combination for bouncing and jerking.
- g. A slow, steady retrieve, like a little snake wiggling along just off the bottom.
- h. Several erratic bounces followed by a steady retrieve . . . repeat.
- i. And so on and so on. If you're fishing with a friend, make sure that each of you try different retrieves until you find the one that produces walleyes.
- j. For more details on retrieve speed, see the editorial in the May 1967 issue of Fishing Facts.

If the walleyes seem to be extra finicky—try the 4 lb. line and tiny No. 8 or even No. 10 hooks. You may lose some—but there are times when you won't even get a "touch" any other way. Better to lose a few than not to get any (to lose) at all! Unlike bass—who head for weeds when hooked—walleyes will usually head for "clean," open water where you can fight them safely until they tire. Always, when using light tackle, try to play the fish out until he's completely tired and comes in belly up. That way, no sudden rush can catch you napping and snap the line or tear out the hook. Keep your rod high so that the built-in flexing power of your rod is fighting and tiring the fish—and ready to absorb any sudden shock that might otherwise snap the line. Don't sell this light tackle short for big fish. I know

fine fishermen (again, like Bob Reimer) who have successfully landed fish up to thirty pounds on a 4 lb. line and tiny No. 8 hooks—even muskies!

As I told you in Book No. 1, I leave the anti-reverse off my reel and tighten down the drag so there is no slippage, and then fight the fish "by hand." This gives me the "feel" of his strength and his weight—a feel you don't get with a slipping clutch. Furthermore, a slipping clutch on nearly all spin and spin-casting reels will twist that fine, monofilament line, which weakens it. When the fish pulls too hard, I crank him out some line to let him run (under pressure of course) and then crank him back in as he weakens and tires.

Remember, you have to tempt that big walleye to take your bait—you must entice him. It's entirely possible to drape that nightcrawler over his nose and still have him ignore it! Many times, you will be fishing in a school of big walleyes and never get a take—because you failed to entice them with the proper retrieve speed or with a natural, almost invisible presentation.

Finally, you will find many times that a big walleye will just "mouth" your bait, sort of like "testing." Most times, you can excite him into taking the bait by gently trying to take it away from him—as if the bait were struggling to get away!

Always keep the picture in your mind of huge, shadowy shapes way down there in the unlit depths who are very cautious and finicky. It may take all of your best efforts to devise the proper retrieve and combine it with light enough line and small enough hooks, plus the largest, squirmiest, most irresistible nightcrawler they've

ever seen in order to put those big, big walleyes on your stringer!

A word about the Nightcrawler Secrets method and water temperatures. Note that I didn't say season. Seasons vary from year to year, and from one part of the country to the other. This method reaches its peak effectiveness when the waters have started to warm. Sometimes, but not always, nightcrawlers *might* not be as effective as minnows in the cold, cold water of early, early fishing. On some occasions, in some waters, they have been as deadly as always, right from the beginning of the season. Of course, all fishing is better when the water begins to warm!

Contrary to what you have always heard about the "dog days" of July and August, fish do NOT become sluggish and dormant during those hot months! It is just the opposite . . . these are the most active months of the year.

Unlike most animals who maintain a constant body temperature (including you and I), a fish's body temperature is the same as the water in which he swims.

The warmer the water, the faster his metabolism. He burns up his food more rapidly—he must eat oftener. In the warmest water of mid-summer, he might digest a minnow in 20 minutes. In the coldest water of mid-winter, that same minnow might last him a week! He moves slowly and sluggishly in cold water.

August, however, is generally one of the worst cold-front months of the entire year—and will often be a poor month for fishing FOR THAT REASON.

In the following chapters, we'll give you a number of specialized techniques for catching walleyes in specialized situations.

CHAPTER XII

Get Results With A Fast Retrieve!

Get Results With A Fast Retrieve!

One morning in 1964, after hours of terrible fishing, I hit upon another way of using the crawler that quickly produced a limit of smallmouth bass for me at high noon—and from shallow water. I got this limit quickly, because I had a good, shallow-water, pre-selected spot, and because I used a new method. At least it was new to me, and I have yet to see anyone else use it.

Since then, under rugged conditions when I can't catch walleyes, or bass, in deep water which I generally fish, this method has always produced a few, good fish for me, sometimes, not often, limits. It produced, too, my largest northern, a 47 inch fish, a true monster, but that was mostly luck.

To explain this, I'm going to take you to Lake Owen in Bayfield County, Wisconsin, even though I've used this on Geneva, on Big Green, Okauchee, in Florida, Arkansas, and other places. It has produced on all these lakes. But don't try it unless you can't catch fish in deep water.

Most fish are in deep water most of the time, but upon occasion, when the deep water schools have departed, those deep water structures are darn empty.

Sometimes, a few good-sized fish get left behind when the school leaves. These fish hide under rocks, logs, etc. They can be caught. There are four ways to do it. In other parts of this book, I tell you about going right in after them. There is also a way to bring them out.

When they come out, they come out fast. They grab your crawler and disappear with it in a blink of an eye, back to their lair they go! If you let them.

I don't use this method unless I have to, because unless you know

exactly which log, rock, dock, or whatever these fish favor, you can spend much time fishing unproductive water. Even so, this method is mighty handy to know about. It caught me, among other fish, a 4 pound smallmouth bass from 12 inches of water at Lake Oconomowoc, on a blank morning, and many walleyes from usually empty water on northern lakes. It has caught fish for me from the shallow water cribs on Lake Geneva, where I thought there was only rock bass. However it's my emergency method, not my basic method.

So let's get back to Lake Owen and the method.

It was, as I said, a tough morning. After hours of probing deep structures, my score was zero. I didn't feel like quitting, so I decided to experiment. In fact, I decided to go to Otter Bay for pan fish. Otter Bay is a shallow, stump and log-infested bay which has only a narrow, shallow channel to the main lake.

I motored to Otter Bay, to one of the choice spots that I know. Because it was mid day and hot, I anchored close to shore in a little shade. I fished, but even the pan fish were on strike. So I decided to experiment.

Years ago, I used to fish the pork chunk that sinks, but which can be fished top water, if you hold your rod high and retrieve rather fast. I decided to try a version of this. I did, with crawlers, it worked—no fish of course, but then I didn't expect any.

In the process of doing this I noticed that I could retrieve the crawler about 12 inches below the surface, if I used a fair-sized (No. 7) split shot on my 6 lb. line. I noticed, too, that

by reeling and jerking with my rod, that this crawler had a most intriguing motion. It would swim like a small snake, then as I paused, it would curl a little, and due to the sinker, begin a dive for the bottom. Then, as I continued to retrieve, it would change its mind and come back up, and continue to swim.

All of this took place about 12 inches below the surface in clear water. It was a most intriguing retrieve. Man, that action looked terrific.

I became engrossed in just doing this. I didn't notice that I was now doing it over a cross hatch of logs.

Suddenly, I saw a shadow dart from under the logs, and just as quickly, it engulfed my crawler and headed back fast.

Holy smoke! I knew it was a good fish. I reacted, I didn't have time to think, I reared back and for a second it was a tug of war. Then the line popped.

I was sick.

My first fish in five hours and he was gone.

"Lightning doesn't strike twice in the same place" I said to myself, and continued to amuse myself with this new retrieve.

Then it happened again.

Exactly as before—and I lost this one too. Another broken line. Talk about being sick!

Now I began to think. Maybe, just maybe, I had something there. I began to fish, to be alert.

I cast as before, well beyond the "spot." I made that crawler swim, pause and swim. As it crossed the logs another smallmouth bass took it. This time I was ready, and the bass was landed.

Then, rather quickly, one after the other, I boated 4 more from the same

area. Two more from these logs, and two from a near-by stump.

I wish you would keep in mind that this was shallow water, that I could see every inch of the bottom except that which was under the logs. I could not see a fish. But a few were there. Apparently they had been watching this crawler swim, curl up, dive, and then swim again. When it got near enough, they dashed out after it.

I thought I had it made, but I fished a hundred, or so it seemed, other places that looked the same. Nothing. Then out in the lake proper, in a cove I struck pay dirt again. In one small section of logs, in this small cove, in shallow water, I hit a walleye. Right there, I got 2 more. Since then, at these spots, and at a few others, I can most always catch fish. I go to them when all else fails.

During good periods, I don't fish these spots. I let them "rest." Besides, deep water is most productive, most of the time.

Now for a few instructions.

These are striking fish. Your bait is moving right along, and the fish come out like a shot. Therefore 4 lb. line isn't necessary. I think 8 lb. is too heavy, so I would use 6 pound. If you use 6 pound, tie your knots carefully, then about every 30 minutes cut them off with 12 inches of line and retie your hook. That line will wear out very quickly, and when that fish hits, you must slug it out with him. You can't let him get back under those snags!

Put the No. 7 split shot about 12 inches up from the hook.

Use a No. 6 hook. This will hold most fish and you don't want to "scare" fish with a bigger one. After all, in shallow water these fish are "spooky" enough!

Hook your crawler just once, through the very nose.

That's all.

Practice a little in non fish water. Just a little, that's all you will need.

There is perhaps one more thing. Fill your reel to within 1/8 inch of the spool edge. Most fishermen don't, but with this kind of fill your reel will

cast much better—and much farther.

P.S. I may as well warn you, that as you begin to catch fish, your line will become very, very important to you. Much more important than your rod or reel. It should be too. It will be expensive—even more than your rod & reel cost you, unless you buy it in 1,000 yard spools—You wait and see.

CHAPTER XII

WALLEYES & LOGS

Walleyes and Logs

I held a stringer loaded with fat walleyes before the man who had told me an hour earlier, "There are no walleyes in Otter Bay; small northernns yes, a few largemouth bass, bluegills by the bushel, but absolutely no walleyes."

The man was the owner of White Pines Lodge, at Lake Owen in Bayfield County, Wisconsin. His resort lies right at the entrance of Otter Bay—a shallow, almost land-locked bay off of cool, deep Lake Owen.

I certainly did not gloat over my success, so as to "rub in" the fact that he had been proven wrong about walleyes in Otter Bay. This man is very popular with guests and the general public, he has operated this resort for years, and is a guy with a very considerable fish knowledge of Lake Owen. It was simply that I was able to devise a new technique to catch walleyes where their presence was unknown to him.

In this case, credit my curiosity about fish, and a conversation which I chanced to overhear . . . and the fact that walleyes love nightcrawlers. This conversation I overheard had taken place in a drug store, in the nearby town of Cable, Wisconsin, the year before this summer when I actually caught the fish. A couple of young men were talking at the soda fountain. I couldn't get all of their conversation, but I did manage to catch words like, "walleyes" and "Otter Bay," and "logs," and more about a terrible snagging problem. It was puzzling, but I filed it away for future use.

The snags I knew about — the walleyes seemed impossible. Otter Bay is very shallow at its deepest, about 8 feet. Much of the Bay is only 3 and 4

feet deep. The Bay itself, is almost land-locked. There is only one very shallow (2 feet) and very narrow entrance from Lake Owen. Much of the Bay is weedy . . . and cross-hatched with logs where it isn't weedy. It's not, to my belief, a spawning ground. I just couldn't imagine game fish like walleyes going through that narrow and shallow opening to get to such a shallow bay. They certainly couldn't live in Otter Bay all year 'round . . . because they would "freeze out" in winter. Why would fish be in there? Still, those men had talked like they knew their subject and it definitely wasn't "tourist talk." Maybe there was something to it—maybe.

Then came this day during the next June. I had had three fine days on Owen, catching many, many smallmouth bass and walleyes. This day was dead. I couldn't buy a fish. So I said, why not give Otter Bay a try?

To get to the Bay, I had to go through that shallow, narrow entrance that goes almost through the front yard of the White Pines Lodge. I pulled into the Pines and asked the owner about walleyes in Otter Bay because I was by no means sure. In fact, I was skeptical.

That was when he said "Otter Bay—walleyes, no."

We talked for a while, and he told me that while he would like to encourage me, he had made a reputation and built a business by being truthful about fishing. So he repeated, "There are no walleyes in Otter Bay, small northernns yes, largemouth bass a few smallmouth bass at times, and tons of panfish—walleyes no."

Since then, since my catch, every year people go into Otter Bay, and

some catch walleyes. Those who do, use a nightcrawler secret that I showed to Don Milne, who owns Eagle Knob Lodge on Owen. It is his guests who catch most of the fish.

Since that day I have often returned to this bay and caught fish, but more important, I have used this trick on many other lakes. It will work anywhere that you have a bad snag problem in shallow water. The big problem, really, is how to pull those fish out from under the logs, stumps or snags, without busting your line.

I have no answer for this. I just pull. I break some lines, I catch some fish.

What's the trick? Not much, really. You simply use a small, and I mean small, weedless, safety-pin-style hook, and fish right in the logs and snags. Hook your crawler exactly as in Book 1.

Where do you get these hooks? That's up to you. Just make them small. A size 4, as small as it may look to you, is too large for best results. A 6 is better. Generally I use a 6. But remember, this is shallow water. These are cautious fish. They are hiding, and they are spooky. Most won't touch heavy tackle. So like it or not, you will do best with light tackle and small, small hooks. Try to get some 8's.

Sinkers or split shot? No, not in shallow water like this. Here you must eliminate all possible heavy tackle. Get rid of everything that you can that a fish can see. Present that crawler in the most natural manner possible.

Now let's go to *where to fish*. First, let me caution you that these fish won't be under every log. I might add right here, that every fish that I have ever caught, under conditions like these, *was under something*. Though, I could see the bottom and see the logs and snags, I could not see a fish.

You may as well face it. You will

have to try many logs, etc., in many places, before you will find a spot that will hold fish. Once you find a spot, mark it. That's where they will always be.

Now let's get back to this "under" business. Again, do remember that we are after the most fish, not the occasional exception. This "under" business is what counts. Being close does not. It's a matter of inches, even one inch. This you had best believe. One inch or a half inch.

Let me tell you how I cope with this situation. I know that fish that are hidden under something in shallow water are spooky—and why shouldn't they be? After all, they got left behind when the school returned to the safety of deep water. I know that I must get the bait to them, and I mean right to them.

This crawler has to settle in the *shadow* of the log, at least. It will be out of my sight, and where this walleye or bass can quickly pick it up, and quickly retreat to his hiding place.

I'm not an accurate caster, so I cast well into shore and over the log or whatever. Then before the crawler settles, I retrieve it to the spot I want to try. Then, I let it settle to the bottom. It disappears because of the shadow. I let it set, and let the crawler work.

Soon the line begins to move. *Immediately* I set the hook! Game fish, almost always, if they take a crawler at all, will take it *all*. Pan fish nibble, so I don't worry about whether he has it or not. If it's a walleye or bass, I know he has it. If it's a pan fish, why then I get my bait out of there and put on a new one, *the sooner the better*.

So I set the hook as soon as the line moves. I don't want that fish to

get any farther into the snags— and he will, if you give him time.

Then comes the time when you test your line and your knots. You must pull him out. You can't play around with him or he will snag you but good.

You will lose fish because of broken lines, but you will catch some too.

Once more around on tackle. Heavy line will sometimes catch fish. You will get ten times, 20 times more 'bites' if you use light line. Sometimes to get *any* bites at all, you *must* use light line.

Light line is 4 lb. to 6 lb. I hate 4 pound line because the knots break so

easily, but I use a lot of it. 6 pound line is not too bad, but it will, under most conditions, cut your 'bites' way down. Still I advise trying it first, that damn 4 pound line is light. It often will break, and break your heart too.

8 lb. line is just too heavy for this kind of fishing. Sure, by using it you will land most of your fish, but unless conditions are exceptional you will get few bites—if any.

So by all means try 6 lb. If that doesn't work, then before leaving a good spot, try 4 lb. You will be surprised. Pleasantly, I'm sure!

forced movement, or a slow jerk, a fast jerk, a slow steady crawl, or a fast swim.

Sound confusing? Don't let it be. These are facts.

It is true that any one of these "retrieves" will sometimes catch walleyes. Too bad, in a way, because once a fisherman lays into a school and fills up by using one retrieve, he generally stays with this particular retrieve for always.

Then, even though he may rather often make good catches, he misses more fish than he catches.

Bob Reimer, who is a retrieve specialist, has proven this to me often—to my sorrow! Our first big catch of walleyes from Okauchee was made because Bob kept experimenting with retrieves. After I had given up, he tried that 'one more cast.' He brought his crawler back with a short, fast crawl and then a slight little jerk. This took the first walleye we had ever caught from Okauchee!

Back to our story about that small river in Wisconsin. After Bob got in position down stream, he cast his crawler well up stream. From where I was laying on the bridge, I could see

it drift most enticingly with the current. It moved along the bottom and right through the group of walleyes. They couldn't have cared less! None moved.

This happened a half dozen times. We could hardly believe it. Bob kept asking, "Are they still there?"

And they were.

Finally Bob eased to cover and rigged his tackle. He put on the slide sinker.

This time he cast further up stream so as not to spook the fish. This time his retrieve was fast. That crawler darted and paused, and darted again. That did it!

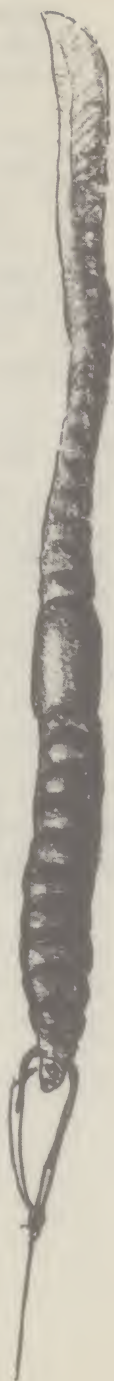
Walleye one grabbed that crawler as it passed him and headed up stream. Bob let him go, he wanted to fight this fish away from the group.

This he did, and he caught two more, before the others took alarm.

This fast retrieve works in deep water, too. I could tell you story upon story about it, but you should find out for yourself.

Add it to your bag of tricks. Don't make it your only trick. *Don't make any one retrieve your only trick!*

#6 SAFETY PIN WEEDLESS HOOK
#8 PREFERRED, IF YOU CAN FIND THEM



CHAPTER XV

CRAWLERS & FAST WATER

Crawlers and Fast Water

In 1966, at Sault Ste. Marie, I saw a few local men make consistent catches of big walleyes, while other locals and tourists got practically nothing. This was in August. Fishing, as usual, was not considered good. Yet these men, day after day, had stringers of strong golden walleyes that anyone, anywhere, would be proud of.

These men used exactly the same method that we described in *Night-crawler Secrets Book I*, except that, because they fished in very fast water, they used a river rig with a heavy dipsey sinker.

I was astounded. I don't know to this day where they picked it up. It was the first time that I had ever seen anyone use this method that hadn't read the book. But use it they did, and catch fish (walleyes & rainbows) they did.

I went with them on one trip. I saw it happen and I caught some myself. Making connections with these men wasn't easy. They kept pretty much to themselves.

Here is how I accomplished it.

In August the family and I, decided to take a non-fishing vacation. Rather, the family decided this, because with *Fishing Facts* and all, I had been neglecting them. We crossed Lake Michigan on the auto ferry and relaxed. Then, by easy stages, worked our way from motel to motel to Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. No fishing.

Of course, just by accident, I had inadvertently packed a couple of rods and a little tackle.

We liked the Soo so much that we decided to spend a few days there. This gave me a chance to fish, so I jumped at it.

I followed my own advice, and got

advice. Taking direction from the motel owner, I contacted several places, and got leads on good spots. I tried them all, I met other fishermen, I caught no fish, nor did I see any fish.

In mid-afternoon of the second day, I gave up. Then, along about evening, new determination set in. I went back to the motel owner and said, "Look, I am a fishing writer, I found no fish. You had better do something about it. I can't write about no fish."

He thought for a few minutes, and then made several phone calls. Finally, one man "allowed" that a few fishermen were doing O. K. He wasn't sure how or where these exceptional fishermen had caught their fish. He had seen the fish. He knew it was true.

We talked, and finally he agreed to contact one of the men. He did, and then he called back. I was to meet a member of this exclusive group at 6:00 p.m.

I couldn't have been treated better. These men headquartered at Al's or Gil's Sports Shop, I think. I lost the names. Grand guys.

Anyway, my contact took me down to their club, and from there we went out in his boat. He said, "we are going to fish crawlers. These worms must be in good condition and we must have the right tackle."

"Do you have 6 lb. monofilament line, No. 6 hooks, heavy dipseys and 3-way swivels?"

I had it all but the heavy sinkers, which we got. Then he said, "I will get the crawlers."

Finally we were set. We motored about 2 miles and where did we go? Back to the heart of the city. We ran right into one of the arch-way flumes

of the power house. That water was really pouring out.

We hooked the boat to one of the rings that locals have mounted for just that purpose, an anchor just wouldn't hold. The water, as I said, was damn fast.

We fished this fast water. The heavy dipsey sinker took the river rig and crawler to the bottom. The crawler was single hooked, just once through the nose, on a No. 6 hook. It sure did stream out and wiggle in that fast, fast current.

We fished the bottom of course. Occasionally, we would raise the rod and the sinker, then the river rig would

move out a few feet, the current you know.

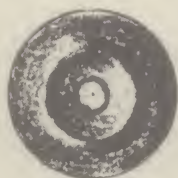
We caught walleyes. In two hours we had nine. It was cool and damp, we went in. (The next day I went out alone. Same results.)

My guide or sponsor said, "we have tried every bait under the sun. Some of these baits catch some fish, but the crawler hooked this way produces 10 to one over other baits.

On the way home, I couldn't help thinking that this system would produce equally well on other fast waters, like say the Mississippi, below the big dams of the south, and on the Fox and Wolf River of Wisconsin. I intend to try it.

SLIDE SINKER AND CRAWLER

END VIEW

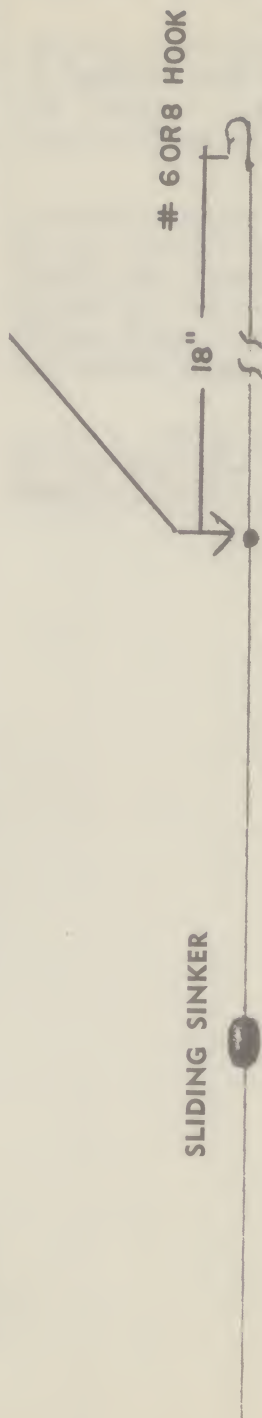


SIDE VIEW



(70)

MOVE THIS SPLIT SHOT OFTEN
—IT WEARS THE LINE



6 OR 8 HOOK

SLIDING SINKER

VERY SMALL SPLIT-SHOT TO KEEP SLIDE SINKER
FROM SLIDING DOWN TO HOOK

CHAPTER XVI

CRAWLERS & SKIRTS

Crawlers and Skirts

There is a way to "dress" up the crawler. Fish truly are finicky. Sometimes an extra touch will provoke a fish. The most effective, extra touch that I know, is the rubber skirt.

This rubber skirt also helps to hide the hook, but mostly it just adds a difference. I don't use it a lot, but it's good enough to keep in my book of tricks.

There's a picture of it in this book and I will tell you how to put it all together, but first a story.

Another tough day, and these days happen to the experts, too—all too often. Roger and I had been through most every trick, and to most every spot, no fish. This, incidentally, was up in the canoe country, the Gunflint Trail Minnesota region. Up there, fish aren't so accustomed to man and often are rather easily caught. Not so this day.

I had a supply of crawlers in my thermo bag, and I had tried them. Results, a few cigar-sized walleyes. But, we were after bass. Smallmouth bass. We had caught none that day. Generally, crawlers on structure kill them.

The day before, you just couldn't miss. Bass, my gosh, you couldn't count them. Then the cold front came.

This day, though bright, clear, and sparkling, was dismal—no fish.

At noon, I rummaged through my kit, looking for I didn't know what. I found a few rubber skirts, and so decided to experiment.

I put a yellow rubber skirt on the line then tied on a No. 6 hook. I put the sinker on the hook, a crawler on the hook, and then slid the skirt down to the sinker.

It looked crazy. Roger laughed. Who could blame him?

After lunch, I began to fish for stragglers, because I knew that after the cold front, the schools were deep. So I cast the rocky shore line.

I cast to within inches of the shore and worked this contraption just off the bottom. I used slight jerks, and the crawler and the skirt waved around like mad.

On my 5th cast in shallow, clear water, out from under a rock came a smallmouth bass. He came busting out, took the bait and went right on up into the air! He weighed two pounds, but looked mighty, mighty good after all those fishless hours.

Now we had it made—we thought.

We rigged Roger up with a like outfit and went to work, but we had forgotten one thing. The cold front. We were fishing for stragglers—for fish that for some reason had got left behind when the school went deep. There aren't many of them.

This we found out. We cast for 20 minutes with no results. Then Roger hit one. Before the afternoon was over, we had eight. Not many for that country, but a lot for that day.

Since then, I have used this trick many times. Sometimes in deep water, sometimes with a weedless hook in weeds or brush. Skirts are cheap, fish aren't.

You can buy them at most any tackle shop. What color? As usual, try several. No one ever knows what color is best.

CHAPTER XVII

THEY'RE DYING OF OLD AGE

They're Dying of Old Age

The walleye is a mystery fish. He is abundant in most waters. He grows big, even in northern waters. Very big. Damn few big walleyes get caught. How many live, ten pound walleyes have you seen—or even 8 pounders, to say nothing of twelve or thirteen pounders? When you see one, you will gasp. They are almost too big to believe. Yet there are a lot of them in most lakes and rivers.

In some lakes, at some times, small walleyes (one & two pounders) are caught regularly even by so-so fishermen. For example, there is Lake Winnebago, Wisconsin and big Winnibigosh, Minnesota. On these lakes small walleyes are caught like perch. Even in these lakes, big walleyes on the stringer are scarce.

What happens to the big walleyes? Why is it that on most lakes, at most times, most fishermen don't catch walleyes, except during the spring spawning season? Why is it that on most lakes at most times, darn few walleyes of any size are caught at all? Why is it that on waters like the Chippewa flowage, fisherman can, year after year, catch only cigar-size walleyes and plenty of them? Walleyes do grow you know. Where do the big ones go? Why aren't more caught?

Is it because they are scarce or because they don't exist? No. Indeed not. The opposite is more often than not the truth. Those big, strong, beautiful walleyes are there, roaming the lake in schools. They just get bigger and bigger, and finally die of old age. They spend the last ten-twelve years or more of their lives, unmolested by man. This happens in the most heavily fished lakes.

Don't believe it? Let me give you

one example (we have hundreds of others):

Long Lake, which lies in farming type country near Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, within an hour and a half drive from Milwaukee, was considered "fished out." The locals demanded a stocking program. Fish biologists knew that this lake wasn't fished out, just as they knew stocking was not the answer. To prove their point, they put out their fyke test nets just after ice out.

These nets were pulled daily for ten days. Nets at certain spots came up bulging with walleyes. About 25% of these walleyes were in the 10-14 pound class. Every fish was fin clipped. The recatch of clipped walleyes was small, yet the nets continued to come in bulging. Proof positive of a big walleye population.

I got the official reports. I told one group of dedicated walleye men about this. These men began to hit Long Lake. They caught walleyes, a lot of them, and some dandies. They did not catch one walleye that was clipped, nor did they catch one walleye over 6 pounds. Draw your own conclusions.

Now you know something of how they move and how they can be found. Now you know the bait they love above all others. You know how to condition and prepare that bait and how to present it. You are well on the road to catching the mystery fish — the big, big walleye . . . but, you will have to travel the rest of the road on your own. I mean, you have to get out on a lake and try these things for yourself. One last word—this is a total method—believe and use it all. Every detail that you skip or fail to believe—will subtract many, many fish from your stringer. That's all—now go fishing!





"If you can learn to catch 6-8 pound walleyes like these from a lake like Okauchee—almost on the doorstep of your home—think of how you could slaughter them on those wonderful lakes 'up north' or in the wilds of Canada!"

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. So many of you wrote in last year that you were unable to find the exact hooks and sinkers recommended by Bill Binkelman, that George Pazik insisted that this kit should be made available to you. This is the kit that Bill Binkelman and George Pazik use—and now, so do other Nightcrawler Secrets fishermen.

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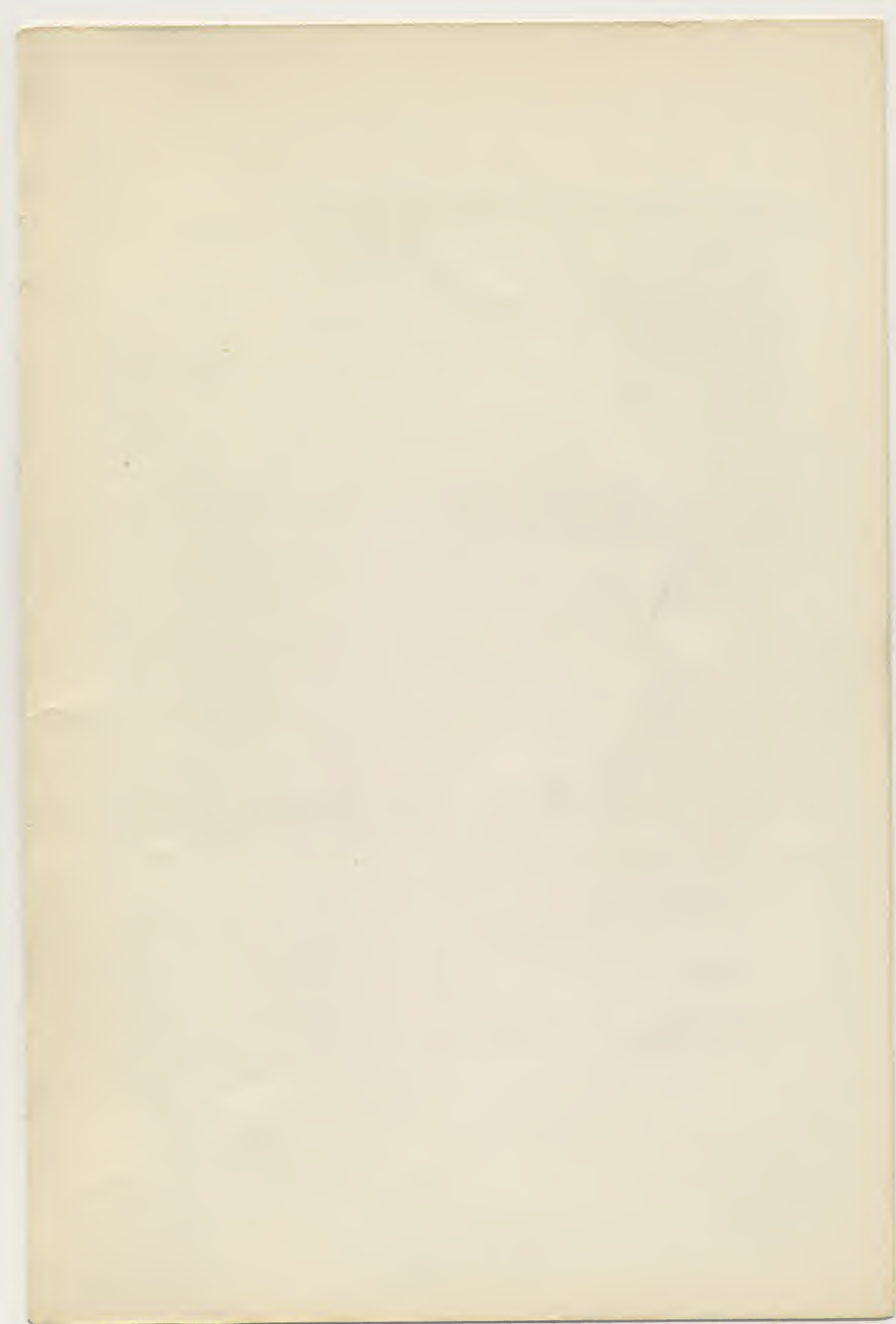
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BILL BINKELMAN of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is the Editor of FISHING FACTS Magazine — a unique publication that tells its avid fishermen-readers in 45 states how to catch BIG fish from lakes near their homes. He is also a man who consistently catches 5 and 6 pound bass and 6 and 8 pound walleyes from a lake 30 miles from Milwaukee that men call Okauchee. Few men catch walleyes like these on fly-in trips to the remotest wilderness lakes of Canada—but he catches them from a typical lake near a big city . . . crowded with speed-boats, water skiers and hundreds of fishermen. Frequently he fishes in a cluster of 10, 12 and 14 boats . . . quickly boating a limit of big fish almost under their noses while they catch none. His secret? An uncommon nightcrawler fished an uncommon way . . . but secret no longer. It is all revealed in the pages of Nightcrawler Secrets Books No. 1 and No. 2. These books are for the fishermen who believe that the purpose of going fishing is to catch fish!